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PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS

# COACHES: EDUCATING PEOPLE

International Seminar  
Rome, 14 -15 May 2015



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## FOREWORD

Sports merit particular attention within a number of contexts, including widespread educational emergencies, or where there are gaps within traditional educational structures, such as in the family or in school. It is important to focus on this theme because although sports are a precious educational resource for younger generations, this “educational road”<sup>1</sup> is not widely appreciated. Within this field, a special role is placed on the coaches, who are considered to be true educators. That is why we chose the theme *Coaches: Educating People* for our International seminar held in Rome from 14 to 16 May 2015. The proceedings of that seminar are contained in this publication.

The coach’s role as an educator has always been one of the highest and noblest objectives throughout the history of sports. The concept of *paideia*, the education of citizens in view of the integral good of the person, was a central theme within Greek culture 2,500 years ago. This method of education was never a solitary job. The entire Greek community assumed the responsibility to form the values of its younger citizens so that they would be prepared to reach a level of excellence in all areas of life. Therefore, if we want to bring the mission of education through sports into fruition, we should also take on these responsibilities as a community through mutual collaboration and support.

The emergence of Christianity added a completely new perspective to *paideia*, as it based personal formation not on the image of the ideal citizen, such as the Greek polis, but on Jesus Christ, who “fully

<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, *Address to the Italian Tennis Federation*, 8 May 2015, 8.

reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear”.<sup>2</sup> St. Paul originally referred to sports in order to reference the spirit of courage that the Christian life demands. The Second Vatican Council later recognized that sports activity belongs to human patrimony, for it has great influence on the formation of souls and contributes to the perfection of the human person.<sup>3</sup> Today, in a culture marked by an anthropological crisis, a crisis of authentic values and the sense of life, we Christians are tasked to promote and defend the unalienable dignity of the human person and its complete development - the foundation of any educational process.

The Church, therefore, gives great attention to sports as one of the most significant and influential cultural phenomena of our time. In the last ten years various pontiffs have spoken on this theme and saw within the world of sports “a new Areopagus” that posed urgent challenges to the mission of the Church. Blessed Paul VI wrote in *Evangelii nuntiandi*: “Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel”.<sup>4</sup> St. John Paul II was a catalyst in drawing the attention of the Church to confront the world of sports, specifically with his establishment of the Office of Church and Sport within the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 2004. Further, Pope Francis’ interest in the world of sports during his Pontificate has also been widely noted. He recently reaffirmed: “The Church is interested in sports because they are at the heart of man, and it recognizes that physical activity effects personal formation, relationships, and

<sup>2</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. IDEM, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*, no. 4.

<sup>4</sup> PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 20.

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spirituality.”<sup>5</sup> In a particular way, we are grateful to the Holy Father for his message with which he wanted to support the work of this seminar.

Over the last ten years, the Office of Church and Sport has organized various seminars, which have called on people who are concerned with recovering the ideal of sports as the true school of humanity, virtue, and life. Each seminar focused on a specific theme that can be found within the wider missionary activity of the Church and within the world of sports. The chosen theme for this year, *Coaches: Educating People*, can be understood more clearly in light of the seminars held in previous years and the logical course of the treated themes.

The first seminar, organized in 2005, was entitled *The Christian mission in the field of sports today*.<sup>6</sup> The reflection was focused on the relationship between sport and evangelization in the contemporary world. The seminar also allowed for the exploration of the foundational principles of the Church & Sport section.

The seminar that followed in 2007, entitled *Sport: an educational and pastoral challenge*<sup>7</sup>, focused on the role of chaplains in the world of sports. In that context, it was observed that the chaplain, without losing his role, needs the collaboration of the athletes, coaches, associations, and the general community. This is in order to answer the questions that emerge within sports which is a vast field of apostolic action.

In the last seminar held in 2009 we examined the theme of Catholic sports associations. The seminar, entitled *Sport, education, faith: towards a new season for Catholic sports associations*, attempted to

<sup>5</sup> FRANCIS, *Address to the Italian Tennis Federation*, cit.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS, *The world of sport today: a field of Christian mission*, Vatican City 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Sport: an educational and pastoral challenge*, Vatican City 2008.

understand the identity and contribution of Catholic sports associations more clearly within the overarching mission of evangelization.<sup>8</sup>

The figure of the coach undoubtedly plays a very important role in the journey to renew the world of sports. While not all teams have a chaplain, all teams certainly have a coach. In today's world, where traditional values are often questioned and where many children devote much of their time to sports - certainly more than they spend at home with their parents or in the parish for catechism or other activities - the coach can serve as a stable reference point, a mentor, and a source of inspiration.

A Christian coach is at the frontlines of educational activity. His central place at the heart of each team is a strategic position that allows him to educate and train athletes to develop "values of the body, the spirit, the heart, and the soul thirsting for the absolute".<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the coach must be a credible and convincing witness to these intangible and spiritual values, which are often made relative or forgotten today. This means that the duty to nourish and transmit them is particularly urgent.

They are spiritual values that include empathic listening, a unity of life, and fairness. Furthermore, he must maintain a supernatural vision for each of his athletes that is also enlightened by faith. This vision must also allow the coach to measure results achieved by athletes not only in qualitative terms, such as their progress in physical activities, but also in relation to their spiritual, mental, and emotional growth as promoted by these authentic values.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Sport, education, and faith: towards a new session for Catholic sports associations*, Vatican City 2011.

<sup>9</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the members of the European Football Associations, 20 June 1980.

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Moreover, it is not enough that the coach is a great expert in his own discipline. In order to truly educate, he especially needs to be a mature person from a human standpoint. Furthermore, as a Christian, he must make his own life consistent with the faith he professes as a true witness of Christ. He must show that being a good Christian is not incompatible with being a good sportsman. In sum, he must be a true teacher of life, and a sure guide! His words and his actions should inspire confidence in the athletes who rely on him. Only when a deep bond of trust is established between coaches and athletes can you work together to recover the primacy of the human person. Only then can it really be possible to give spirit back to the world of sports today.

This year's seminar is based on the reference point that can be found in the message the Holy Father addressed to all participants – more than one hundred people from several continents. It is a message that reflects the sincere hope that the Holy Father places in the world of sport. With it, the Pope stressed the ability of coaches to make a valuable contribution to the climate of solidarity and inclusion amongst the most marginalized young people who find themselves at risk in many social situations. Coaches have the opportunity to bring these children closer to sport and thus to positive socialization experiences. If a coach has a “human and spiritual balance,” as Pope Francis writes, he will also preserve the authentic values of sport, the fundamental nature of the game and the socializing activities, while preventing its distortion by various external interests, which are becoming increasingly intrusive.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the Holy Father called for the cooperation of the seminar participants and urged all organizations involved in the world

<sup>10</sup> POPE FRANCIS, *Message to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity Cardinal Stanisław Rylko on occasion of the international seminar “Coaches: Educating People”*, 14 May 2015.

of sports, such as international federations, and national, religious, and secular sports associations, to pay due attention and invest in the necessary resources for training professional, humane, and spiritual coaches.

The first day of the seminar had two distinct phases. First, Norbert Müller and Gerard Treutlein discussed the role of an athlete's relationship with the coach throughout the various stages of their participation in sports. Professor Müller, a member of the Committee of Education and Culture of the International Olympic Committee, presented the report on youth and the various challenges that coaches face today. Next, Gerard Treutlein addressed the issue of doping which, together with violence, it is the most threatening challenge for sport in the world today. In his presentation he analyzed the causes of doping and how the culture of consumerism and the pursuit of success at all costs have dominated the true meaning of sports. He also examined the important role that the coach must take on in relation to the athlete's mental training in the face of such attitudes.

The second session of the day focused on the profile of a coach. Raymond McKenna, president of Catholic Athletes for Christ, spoke about the importance of "training the trainers" which stressed the unique role of the coach to do good in society and in his sport.

In the roundtable that concluded the day, we heard the stories of four speakers regarding the common theme of "the coach as a means of social inclusion". Irene Villa, writer and Paralympic athlete, spoke of the strength that sport can give people to overcome any barrier. In this context, the coach is not only the person who helps achieve a goal, but also the one who is always there for the athlete during the joyful and sad moments, which also contributes to the growth of individuals.

Jaime Fillol, former tennis player and professional coach, explained the exceptional importance of sport in the context of poverty.

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Indeed it has been proven that it is possible to improve the lives of people through the sports, which in many cases has to do to those most in need of not only a teacher in sports, but of a father figure.

We are also provided with first-hand accounts of social integration that took place through sport. Kennedy D'Silva, president of the John Paul II Foundation for Sport in Goa, India, spoke about the various training projects the foundation uses to promote the development of values and prevent social exclusion. Next, educator Sandra Allen Craig presented the "Future in Youth" project that the Catholic University of Australia used for many years in Timor-Leste. She outlines the ability of the program to train coaches who work to promote the development and peaceful integration of people from different ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds.

The second day of the Seminar had a more technical profile. It began with the intervention of Antonio Manicone, assistant coach of the Swiss national team, former professional soccer player who holds degrees in Physical Education. Manicone, having played and coach at amateur and professional levels, has gained the knowledge and experience to be able to clearly explain the influences and pressures that the coach has to face every day. He described the educational function that coaches have, the relationship he has had with parents of amateur athletes, and finally the perils of fame, money, and media in the world of sport.

After the presentations, Cardinal George Pell, Prefect of the Secretariat of Economy, presented an interesting report on the figure of the coach and his witness of faith and life in service of the person. It is well known that the Cardinal has always been a lover of sport and, before entering the seminary, he played as ruckman in Australian football and served as a coach. Cardinal Pell referred to evils that plague the world sport today and called for the training of sports values in schools. He shared a number of personal experiences where he has

*Stanisław Rylko*

witnessed sports strengthening the faith of others and how they have been a bridge between the person and the Catholic faith.

Finally, at the end of the day, we heard the contributions of Chris Tiu, professional basketball player from the Philippines, Massimo Achini, President of the Italian Sports Center, Iván Ramiro Córdoba, former professional soccer player, and Alison Wanner, missionary FOCUS Varsity Catholic. All offered their personal testimonies on how sport can change people's lives and how, without the help of the coach, this would not be possible. In particular, the experience of Alison clearly showed that, thanks to sport, improved her faith enough that she dedicates her life to preaching it to everyone. Unexpectedly, at the end of her speech, she announced that she will enter the novitiate of the Servants of the Heart of Jesus.

As S.E. Mons. Joseph Clemens, secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, said in his conclusions, this Seminar has undoubtedly contextualized the message of the Holy Father in terms of the atmosphere of friendship and cooperation that sports cultivate from the very beginnings of one's life. The event gave participants hope to continue work as a team to ensure that sport is really a means of transmission of values and faith and that it does not stray away from its true identity: to elevate the person and his dignity to be a child of God.

Card. STANISŁAW RYLKO  
*President*  
*Pontifical Council for the Laity*

## Message of His Holiness Pope Francis on the occasion of the International Sport Seminar

*To my Venerable Brother  
Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko  
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

I address my cordial greeting to you and to all those attending the International Seminar to study the theme “Coaches: Educating People”, organized by the Church and Sport section of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. By following your journey of reflection and promotion of human and Christian values of sports, in this fourth Seminar you have opportunely taken into consideration the figure of the coach, placing emphasis on his or her role as educator, both in the professional or amateur sphere.

All of us, in life, need educators, mature, wise and balanced people who help us to grow in the family, in our studies, in work and in faith. Educators who encourage us to take the first steps in a new activity without being afraid of the obstacles and challenges to be faced; who spur us to overcome difficult moments; who exhort us to have trust in ourselves and in our teammates; who are beside us both in times of disappointment and of failure, and in those of joy and success. Indeed, the athletic coach too, especially in the Catholic environment of amateur sport, can become for so many kids and young people, very important for the development of a mature, harmonious and complete person.

The presence of a good educator-coach is providentially revealed especially in the years of adolescence and early youth, when the personality is actively developing and seeking models to refer to and identify with; when one strongly feels a need for the apprecia-

tion and esteem not only of one's peers but also of adults; when, in following bad examples and in seeking false happiness, the danger of floundering is increasingly real. In this delicate phase of life, great responsibility lies with a coach, who often has the privilege of spending hours a week with young people and of having great influence on them through his or her behavior and personality. The influence of educators, especially on young people, depends more on who they are as persons and on how they live than on what they say. Thus, how important it is for a coach to be an example of integrity, coherence, of right judgement and impartiality, but also of *joie de vivre*, patience, capacity for respect, and of benevolence toward everyone, especially the most disadvantaged! How important it is for a coach to be an example of faith! Indeed, faith always helps us to lift our gaze to God, so as not to absolutize our activities, including sports, be they amateur or competitive, and therefore to have the right objectivity and the wisdom to relativize both defeats and successes. Faith gives us that gaze of goodness on others, which enables us to overcome the temptation of excessive rivalry and aggression, makes us understand the dignity of each person, even of the less gifted and disadvantaged. Coaches, in this sense, can make such a valuable contribution to the creation of a climate of solidarity and inclusion with regard to young people who are marginalized and at risk for social reasons, finding the appropriate ways and means to draw them too to participate in sport and to experiences of socialization. A coach with human and spiritual balance will also know how to preserve the authentic values of a sport and its fundamental nature as a game and as a socializing activity, preventing it from degenerating under the increasingly intrusive pressure from so many interests today, especially economic.

Next to parents, teachers, priests and catechists, a coach can therefore be an effective formator of young people. Every good formator must receive a solid formation. It is necessary to form formators. That

*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis*

is why it is important that your seminar recall all the organizations operating in the field of sport, national and international federations, lay and ecclesial athletic associations, to pay due attention and to invest the necessary resources for the professional, human and spiritual formation of coaches. How beautiful it would be if in all sports, and at all levels, from large international competitions to the tournaments in parish recreation centers, young people could encounter in their coaches authentic witnesses of life and of faith lived!

I pray the Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, that your work in these days may bear abundant fruit for the pastoral care of sport, and that it continue to promote Christian holiness in this environment too, in which so many young lives can be reached and transformed by joyous witnesses of the Gospel. I ask you to please pray for me, and with affection I bless you. From the Vatican,

14 May 2015, Feast of St Matthias the Apostle

*Francis PP.*



## CONFERENCES



# “The world of youth and the world of sports: A challenging combination for today’s coaches”

NORBERT MÜLLER\*

## INTRODUCTION

Since my research topic proves to be especially comprehensive and multifaceted, exploring only some basic aspects could most likely fill a seminar throughout the course of an entire semester. Additionally, both dimensions included in the topic, namely “the world of youth” and “the world of sports”, are defined and represented differently in many cultural environments worldwide. Thus, participants of the World Youth Day in Rio 2013 and the approximately same-aged participants of the Youth Olympic Games 2010 and 2014 can hardly or not at all be compared. Let us look at the numbers: While we met one million religiously rooted youngsters praying and singing in Rio, 4,000 adolescents age 14 to 18 constituting the sporting elite attended in Singapore 2010 and Nanjing 2014.<sup>1</sup>

Looking at attendance numbers of the Winter Youth Olympic Games, 1200 participants from 69 mostly European countries in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. SINGAPORE YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, *Singapore Games Impact Study*, 2011; cf. also INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, *Nanjing 2014*.

which winter sports are common attended, including many nations with a Christian-based tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Now, let us focus on cultural circumstances and contexts. Every single one of us is influenced by the characteristic sports conditions and requirement, moral values, rules and norms – or simply put the ethos – of our native country.

Sports conditions can refer to a combination of physical training at schools along with other influences. For example, recreational sports are often influenced by the respective geographical conditions, while competitive sports are often dependent on nation-specific traditions and societal terms. In addition, parents, friends, and the social environment also tend to be influential factors.

Based on a 200-year-old tradition, there are 90,000 sports clubs with over 35 million members in my home country of Germany. Club memberships are affordable to adolescents, making it possible for every family to afford one. Elite confines that hinder children from being physically active in a sports club are nonexistent. Such possibilities that allow for the engagement in group sports are not to be considered subsidiary but an essential matter for every human being in his or her development.

In its Fundamental Principles, the IOC holds that the practice of sport is a human right. Thus, the UNESCO-Charter for sports and physical training calls for mandatory school sports as well as for adequate group sports to be available for every single person, especially for youth. Yet, both intention and reality often do not correspond with one another. This efforts, however, obtains my absolute approval.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Innsbruck 2012: “*Be Part of it!*”, Official report of the 2012 Youth Olympic Games, 52.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. UNESCO, *Revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Sport*, 2015.

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During numerous summer camps at the International Olympic Academy, I had the opportunity to speak with young people hailing from all over the world. I've also been able to travel to many continents and places in various positions, such as a sports development worker, sports scientist, Olympic researcher, and while assisting Catholic missions. Nevertheless, I still cannot claim to fully understand the complexity of youth participation in sports in every country.

It is clear that a solution to the “challenges coaches face today” is quite difficult. As a basis of discussion on this theme, the only response I dare to give refers to my own home country of Germany. Certainly we can use this basis to draw a complex picture in order to consider the situations found in other countries as well.

Today, the world for a typical German adolescent is focused on the engagement in a variety of sporting activities. For example, 60% of teenagers up to the age of 18 are active sport club members.<sup>4</sup> This does not include adolescent participation in activities outside of sport clubs, such as skateboarding or rollerblading in public places and enjoying informal sports collectively. Yet an athletic youth culture that influences many youngsters also has its downside. In comparison to my own adolescence in the 1960s, such activities were often attributed to church-based youth work and the dedication involved in such.

At the same time, there is a clear decline in youth participation in competitive sports. This trend has led some sports as a whole to slip into a rather marginal position, including track and field, which is one of the core sports of the Olympic games. Due to continuously increasing training demands, track and field coaches face the new challenge of young people no longer being able or willing to meet such high

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Robert Koch Institut, *RKI.de*.

expectations. Club and association boards are even more concerned since such participation is crucial in order to keep these sports “alive” throughout future generations. Even German soccer is no exception since, especially in metropolitan areas, children and adolescents with migrant backgrounds are the main participants in the sport.

Furthermore, parents now tend to focus more on children’s academic success. Canceled sport lessons usually do not cause any protest or discontent, in contrast to canceled lessons in subjects such as mathematics or languages. The academic and professional development of youth is clearly prioritized.

#### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHICAL AND SOCIAL STANDARDS IN YOUTH HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT AND THE INFLUENCE OF TRAINERS

I had the opportunity to examine these challenges through an analysis I conducted with the cooperation of Kristina Bohnstedt at the University of Mainz from 2004-2005. In this study, we surveyed 181 young elite athletes from nine different Olympic sports at five elite sports schools. Considering the universality of the topic, it is possible to conceptually apply and transfer these findings to various countries, which would make for good points for further discussion.

As a result of numerous problematic developments in the arena of athletics, an array of ethical issues have emerged at the forefront of the athletic community. In addition to doping and a profit based mentality, elite sports have become a recurring focus of discussion in regards to ethical responsibility. The people responsible for these discussions and decisions, particularly leading members of sports associations and sports scientists, must make their position clear and help parents shed their fears.

Therefore, specific ethical standards for trainers are increasingly being demanded. The German Sport Association first responded to

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this demand by publishing the “Code of Conduct for Trainers”, in 1997.<sup>5</sup> As early as 1984 and again 2001, the internationally appreciated German sport pedagogue Meinberg formulated ethical principles for child and teenage high-performance sport, which have lost nothing of their importance.<sup>6</sup> In fact, they are more important than ever in 2015, as a result of professionalization and media attention.

According to Meinberg, an optimum approach to training children and teenagers in high-performance sports depends on the following ethical principles:

1. Using another person as a means to an end
2. The principle of helping
3. The principle of respect
4. The principle of equality
5. The principle of participation
6. The principle of solidarity
7. The principle of responsibility
8. The principle of fairness
9. The principle of achievement
10. The principle of suitability for age groups
11. Appropriate body ethics
12. The principle of reasonableness
13. The principle of trust

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Deutscher Sportbund, *Ehrenkodex für Trainerinnen und Trainer im Sport*, in: G. ANDERS, W. HARTMAN, *Sozialkompetenz von Trainerinnen und Trainern: Documentation of the workshops from 28 September 1996*, Cologne 1997, 88-90.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E. MEINBERG, *Kinderhochleistungssport: Fremdbestimmung oder Selbstentfaltung?*, Cologne 1984; cf. also IDEM, *Trainerethos und Trainerethik*, Cologne 2001.

## *1. Aim of survey and methods*

My research investigates whether or not child and teenage high-performance athletes think that their trainers observe Meinberg's 13 ethical principles for a healthy high-performance sport environment. The young high-performance athletes were asked to evaluate the implementation of ethical standards during daily training situations.

Research data was collected through a survey using a standardized questionnaire, which was completed under supervision. The interviewees, aged between 14 and 19, attend sport-orientated schools in five German cities (Berlin, Erfurt, Kaiserslautern, Koblenz and Frankfurt).

## *2. Results and interpretation*

### *2.1. The sample survey*

In sum, 181 young high-performance athletes participated in the survey, 80 of them female (44.2%) and 101 male (55.8%). 15.5% of the athletes competed in sports with a young high-performance age (e.g. gymnastics, figure skating, swimming), 30.9% in team sports (volleyball, handball, basketball, football) and 53.6% in various other sports with an average age of 8.7, and at the average age of 11.2 years for high-performance training (daily training, regular competitions and training camps). The young athletes train at different training centers, with approximately 40% training at two centers. About half of the athletes are members of training groups at their sports club, at the Olympic training center, and at their sport-orientated school. Thus, 52% of the athletes work with at least two different trainers, and 20.7% even with three. 27.6% of the athletes live in a full-time-boarding school, 11% attend a part-time-boarding school, and 61.3% live

with their families. In respect to their living arrangements, 90.1% of the young athletes reported that they have become more independent through high-performance training.

Before the survey, 65.0% of the athletes reported that they had already discussed practice-oriented ethical questions at school. Given the age of the interviewees, it can be assumed that under normal circumstances they possess a sufficient capacity for ethical judgement. This would not be the case with children, but teenagers can be considered mature enough. Their involvement in high-performance sports may in the course of time affect their evaluation of trainer behavior and of their own situation.

The teenagers' answers show, however, that they are able to critically evaluate both their own situation and the behavior of their trainers. The fact that the majority of interviewees participate in sports with a late high-performance age positively affects the starting age for high-performance training.

## 2.2. Ethical values in youth high-performance sport

The analysis focuses on the attitudes of young high-performance athletes. The questionnaire was intended to show whether the teenagers' values, including their evaluation of trainer behavior, had already been influenced by their involvement in high-performance sports and the concomitant concentration on achievement. In addition, the teenagers' general value systems were compared with the values conveyed by their trainers, and the values perceived in competitions.

The majority of interviewees want above all their main sport to teach them achievement-oriented values. At the top of the hierarchy of desirable values are: *Ambition* (93.4%), *competitiveness* (90.1%) and *assertiveness* (75.7%). While values such as *fairness* (68.5%), *independence* (65.7%), *friendship* (64.6%), *health* (47%) and *willingness to take*

*risks* (44.2%), still play a fairly important role for the young athletes, they consider values such as *happiness* (35.9%), *honesty* (27.6%), *justice* (27.1%) and *equal opportunities* (22.7%) to be less important. Furthermore, it can be observed from the athletes' answers that trainers tend to teach the achievement-oriented values much more frequently than the others.

An examination of correlations shows that – except for the values of *ambition* and *justice* – there is a statistically significant correlation between the athletes' desire to learn these values through their main sport, and the frequency with which these values are taught by the trainer.

The assessment of values in competitions reveals an even stronger emphasis on achievement-oriented values. Thus, 98.8% of the athletes hold *competitiveness* and 95% hold *ambition* to be very important in competitions, while values such as *justice* and *friendship* play a secondary role.

Since the young high-performance athletes prioritize achievement-oriented values, which they expect their main sport to teach them, and which they consider even more important in competitions, we must conclude that trainer behavior may likewise be assessed on the basis of the principle of achievement. This tendency seems to be further strengthened by the fact that the athletes consider the values most often taught by their trainers to be particularly important. Accordingly, in their moral assessment of trainer behavior, the athletes may be following the ethical standards of their trainers. The close connection between the values of trainers and athletes casts some doubt on the young high-performance athletes' ability to judge their trainers' behavior objectively and critically. However, it is not clear whether the values held by the athletes are shaped by the trainers, by parents, or by other factors such as personality. The data suggests that the interview-

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ees judge the behavior of their trainers as well as their own situation from an achievement-oriented perspective.

*3. The implementation of Meinberg's ethical principles using the example of trainer behavior*

Questions concerning trainer behavior were intended to show whether in dealing with the young athletes the main trainer (i.e. the trainer with whom the athlete works most of the time) follows Meinberg's 13 ethical principles in order to ensure a humane experience of high-performance sport. At the same time, the analysis examined possible connections between the implementation of these principles and factors such as the athletes' gender, their particular school, their age or their main sport.

The most important results of the survey are shown in the following table:

Using another person as an end in themselves rather than a means to an end	My trainer wants me to win so that I can enjoy success.	61.3 %
	My trainer accepts that my body cannot always achieve perfect results.	53.0 %
The principle of respect	My trainer is very often ready to listen to my wishes and fears.	52.5 %
	My trainer always respects my opinion.	48.1 %
	My trainer is sometimes ready to listen to my wishes and fears.	42.5 %

The principle of equality	My trainer sometimes asks me what I think.	54.7 %
	My trainer listens to my criticism and responds to it.	53.3 %
	My trainer very often asks me what I think.	30.9 %
The principle of solidarity	My trainer only reproaches me when there is a good reason.	82.3 %
	My trainer never reproaches me when I am not successful.	9.4 %
	My trainer always reproaches me when I am not successful.	8.3 %
	My trainer critically examines both his/her own work and mine when I am not successful.	79.0 %
	My trainer lays the entire blame on me when I am not successful.	14.9 %
	My trainer also blames himself/herself when I am not successful.	6.1 %
The principle of fairness	My trainer is equally happy for all when they do well.	81.8 %
	My trainer supports us all equally.	68.0 %

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The principle of suitability for children/teenagers	My trainer knows how old I am and treats me accordingly.	84.0 %
	My trainer involves me in more decisions as I grow older.	54.1 %
The principle of reasonableness	I never feel afraid during training.	76.8 %
	I sometimes feel overtaxed during training.	68.0 %
The principle of helping	My trainer immediately tries to help me when I say I have a problem.	82.2 %
	My trainer always listens to me when I have a problem.	66.7 %
The principle of trust	I very often trust my trainer.	70.7 %
	My trainer makes all decisions together with me.	65.7 %
	I sometimes discuss personal problems with my trainer.	50.8 %
	I sometimes have a say in which competitions I enter.	40.3 %

The principle of responsibility	My trainer sometimes talks with my parents.	60.8 %
	I take part in both team and individual competitions.	59.6 %
	My trainer sometimes organizes activities outside training for us.	58.6 %
	My trainer reduces the training load when there are many exams and I have problems at school.	54.1 %
	My trainer sometimes helps me to make plans for school and for my career.	47.0 %
	My trainer never helps me to make plans for school and for my career.	44.2 %
	My trainer sometimes talks to my teachers in order to coordinate the demands of school and training.	41.7 %
	My trainer never talks to my teachers in order to coordinate the demands of school and training.	38.3 %
	My trainer never reduces the training load.	29.8 %

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The principle of achievement – making no fetish of achievement	My main trainer is happy in competitions when I do well.	94.5 %
	Our training is achievement-oriented and fun-oriented.	59.7 %
	Our training is purely achievement-oriented.	40.3 %
A body ethic suitable for children/teenagers – not exploiting the body	When I am physically exhausted in training, I still have to carry on until the end of the training session.	44.2 %
	When I am physically exhausted in training, I am allowed a short break during training.	43.6 %

In general, while the majority of trainers are largely guided by Meinberg's ethical principles in their work with the young high-performance athletes, a critical examination of individual principles also reveals some transgressions. The trainers who athletes referenced for their incidences of behaviour and for falling short of ethical expectations should be considered problematic or irresponsible.

Correlations between the type of sport and the degree of conformity with individual principles are rare. Sport-specific differences only occur with the implementation of *the principle of equality*, *the principle of suitability for children/teenagers*, *the principle of participation* and *a body ethic suitable for children/teenagers*.

According to these principles, trainers transgress these ethical boundaries most often in team games. Yet it can be argued that a disregard of ethical principles by trainers working with young high-per-

formance athletes can be found in all types of sport. This indicates that adherence to ethical principles depends on the individual personality of the trainer rather than on other factors.

More detailed results could be obtained by examining the implementation of these ethical principles in additional types of youth high-performance sport on an even broader basis.

## CONCLUSIONS

It has become clear that Meinberg's principles, while very theoretical and general, have a practical application and can be used for a critical examination of the behaviour of trainers in different forms of sport.

The teenagers' assessment of their individual situations and problems proves that Meinberg's demands are realistic. The athletes surveyed mostly criticized the disregard for these individual principles by their respective trainers and coaching assistants.

The Olympic Movement must become more aware of its responsibility for the ethical and social conditions under which young athletes live and train. Surveys like the presented one should therefore be conducted on a large international scale.

It is a great development that the IOC Athletes Commission understands the necessity to form athletes and trainers through the first international programme under the name "MOOC" elaborated from different independent universities, and just published at the end of April 2015. Free online access to the programme in French or English is available to any interested athletes and/or trainers.<sup>7</sup>

These actions suggest that the IOC has realized the importance of qualified pedagogical work with high-performance athletes and ac-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, *Athlete Learning Gateway*, 2015.

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knowledges certain shortcomings. The target group, however, should include the entire “entourage”, which would include, in addition to athletes, medical professionals, physiotherapists, and other association functionaries.

Looking at the results of these 181 young high-performance athletes in 2004, the outcome seems to be satisfying. However, such results can vary, for example, whenever sponsors expect better performances or the government decides to promote only sports that are more likely to bring medals; which is a current topic in my native country. Thus, the immense strains put on coaches to maximize performances are then passed on to the athletes or can even urge coaches or athletes to quit.

The fact that in the 8 billion USD contract with the International Olympic Committee and the American network NBC demands concrete educational efforts to be installed by the IOC within the following four years, offering another 100 million USD to support the successful realization of such, cannot be regarded a perversion.<sup>8</sup>

A “humane high-performance sport” just like social market economy, which prevailed in West Germany in the 1980s, no longer exists. In order to ensure athletic success, the global norm often becomes the reference point. Let us look at China, where national prestige is prioritized and fostered by all means possible. Thus, one cannot be not surprised that thousands of young Chinese boys and girls are being systematically trained in artistic gymnastics, practicing eight hours a day for five years or more. Who is supposed to keep up with that? Which country, which continent is able and willing to afford this? Where does such an attitude fit in other cultural contexts? Thus, only

<sup>8</sup> Cf. IDEM, *IOC Awards Olympic Games broadcast rights to NBCUniversal through to 2032*, May 2014.

a few highly talented athletes from more liberal systems are going to be able and willing to keep up.

With a total population of only 16.3 million, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) had 1,800 fully paid coaches employed, compared to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with a total population of 63 million, which only had 180 professional coaches during that time. Such numbers demonstrate impressively, what is considered valuable to a country, or more specifically, for what a country is willing to spend money on. Athletic success then becomes national success utilized to represent a successful political system and political regime structures.<sup>9</sup>

In March 2007, I had the opportunity to teach a course called, *Olympic Values and Fair Play-Education* for four weeks at the Beijing Sports University. After about two weeks a student asked me openly in the lecture hall: “Why are you teaching this to us? We want to win as many medals as possible at the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing. Therefore, we cannot have consideration for such sporting ethics. Surely, Coubertin was influenced by European Christian traditions. These, however, do not apply to us”.

Nevertheless, the pastoral responsibility of the church should put youth physical and mental development above all and should also oppose the exploitation of young high-performance athletes. Relating to this matter, the Youth Olympic Games are not free of criticism, even though they are based on a positive Olympic educational program, including Fair Play-Education. Even though Coubertin demanded in 1925: *Ne troublez pas l'équilibre des saisons* (Let us not trouble the equilibrium of our children's development), he had already written

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. HOTZ, “Doping und Ethik” – ein Thema mit Tradition und offenbar ohne Ende!, in: *Leistungssport* 33 (2003) 1, 17-22.

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anachronistically in 1900 that modern competitive sports often lead to excess, which is “nobility and its selection”. The Olympic motto ‘*citius-altius-fortius*’ (higher-stronger-faster) was stated by Coubertin’s fatherly friend, his Dominican colleague Henri Didon, and is said to originate from his Christian-based educational attitude. Here, Coubertin appears to be torn between his Olympic and his sports-pedagogic mission, wanting to keep and eventually combine both.<sup>10</sup> In light of the today’s doping problem, for example, we can assume that Coubertin was hardly able to anticipate the future development of his movement.

Now, it is up to us to decide which aspect of sport is most important to focus on and what images of humanity we want to represent. In my opinion, there is one main point to be considered, namely, that each and every one of us should get the chance to become everything he or she is able to be. This can certainly not be realized by structuring our kids’ and teenagers’ entire upbringing solely on the basis of athletic success. Ultimately, they could be exploited enough to function solely as means to an end – to assuage the appetite for success.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. N. MÜLLER, *Olympismus*, in: P. RÖTHIG, R. PROHL, *Sportwissenschaftliches Lexikon*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Schorndorf 2004, 414-416.



## Value-oriented, high-performance sports: Do we have a chance?

GERHARD TREUTLEIN\*

Let me start with a little story. I was invited to Casablanca three years ago by the president of a private association for the fight against doping, along with other experts in the field, the King, and influential members of Muslim society. The association has had such great success that those very influential Muslims pronounced a *fatwa* against doping and abuse of medication. Following this example, I believe that Christian churches should also take a very clear stance against doping and the abuse of medication. While the *fatwa* does not necessarily mean that Morocco, or other regions heavily populated with Muslims, are free of 'dopers,' the clear position of religious leaders is quite significant.

The reality in Germany is less positive than Norbert Müller's findings would lead you to believe. During the 35 years that I have been responsible for the German National Students' Team for athletics, I have spoken with many athletes about their experience concerning their coaches' position on this matter. The coach's positions were quite positive among the younger age group, yet when they competed at a national level, the response was quite negative. Perhaps this is because at this level, results become more and more important, while the development of personality becomes less and less important.

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CONCERNS OF ORGANIZED SPORT

The overarching question is: what are the main concerns of high-performance sports? First, one must consider two different points of concern that vary between countries and societies: the emphasis on athletic performance on an international level and the emphasis on the development of the athlete as an individual.

FOCUS ON MEDALS	FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Winning medals and success is expected</li><li>• Pressure from country and society</li></ul> Risks: Athletes go beyond natural limits Attitude of 'the end justifies the means'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of the individual</li><li>• Accepting limits and rules (doping free sports)</li></ul> Risks: Could lead to limited success on an international level

It would be ideal to find a balance between these two points yet unfortunately, the primary emphasis is often put on results. This is especially the case in result-oriented sports, which often leads to an attitude of 'the end result justifies the means'. From the first point of view, there is also a risk that both athletes and coaches go beyond their natural limits. From the second point of view, there is a risk that limited success at the international level would cause most coaches and athletes to earn less money, and receive less attention by the media.

1. *Tasks, expectations, and problems*

In a value-orientated sport, coaches should strive to ensure that their young athletes understand values such as fair play, respect, will-

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ingness to be part of the team, and openness to others. Coaches should also aim to teach their young athletes about a proper balance of educational and performance goals and ultimately to take responsibility for themselves and for other sportsmen.

In reality, do these tasks for coaches of competitive sports correspond with the expectations held by politicians and the public? The positions of a number of influential leaders provide interesting insights on this reality. For example, Erich Honecker, a politician in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) asserted in 1947, "Sports are not for sports, sports will be used in the end for the best of the country." Another GDR politician Walter Ulbricht expressed a similar attitude by saying, "competitive sports [serve as] an arena for competition between political systems" in 1955. Further, Erbach (GDR) stated in 1972 "the lot of medals won by the GDR reflects the values of the socialistic political system". Finally, the current sports minister of Germany de Maizière stated in 2015, "if competitive sports is to be supported by the government, it is not to make sports organizations and sportsmen to feel comfortable within society; it is to make international success possible".

All leaders who give money to high-performance sports have the same expectation: We give money and therefore we expect results and medals, and if possible more results and medals than in the past. Thus, ethics and moral standards are in conflict with performance expectations. This raises a number of fundamental questions: Can competitive sports contribute to the betterment of society as a whole? Can the way they are practiced today, with an emphasis on winning, really be a model for society? Finally, are clean sports even possible?

Unfortunately, results of various surveys express the opposite. A survey found that at least 35% of competitive German sportsmen dope, yet according to German drug testing statistics, less than 1% of

samples show positive results.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, research conducted by Donati in 2004 showed that at least 59 of the top 550 Italian athletes have practiced doping, all of whom were awarded medals at the 2004 Olympic games.<sup>2</sup>

COMPETITIVE SPORTS NEED A FAVORABLE PUBLIC REPUTATION, YET REPUTATION DOES NOT REFLECT REALITY

## 2. *Different positions concerning the goals of performance sports*

A big problem for value-oriented, high-performance sports is that their public appearance seems to be more important than reality. We can see this by examining two different positions can be found regarding German sports. The first position is that of the Olympic movement, "*citius, altius, fortius*", which conveys the message that there are no limits at a high level of performance. This attitude has certainly contributed to the continuous increase in training hours and level of intensity in many sports.

An example of this influence can also be seen in the story of a young gymnast who lived near the German city of Heidelberg. At ten years old, she trained 30 hours a week and dedicated an additional 10 hours of her time to travel to additional training venues in the city of Mannheim. With 40 hours dedicated to training and 30 hours spent at school, 70 hours of this young girls life is occupied during any given week! Is this really a value-oriented sport for a young girl? This represents how non-competitive directions of sports often have little chance of being accepted.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. STRIEGEL, R. ULRICH, P. SIMON, *Randomized response estimates for doping and illicit drug use in elite athletes*, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. DONATI, *Lo sport del doping*, Torino 2012, 304.

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On the other hand, the former principles of German Gymnastics Federation (*der Deutscher Turner-Bund*) maintained that the goal of participating in the sport is to promote a good and healthy current and future lifestyle for young athletes. That would mean that participation is what counts and is more important than winning. From this perspective, an average level of performance is important for health and therefore you don't need high performance and it is necessary to accept limits.

Alternate methods that could be applied to Germany would be sports competitions that already take place in schools for all students (*Bundesjugendspiele*), but without the focus on who will come in first, second or third place. Another approach could be taken from the sporting activities in workers' sports movements or the Catholic sports clubs, such as the Deutsche Jugend Kraft (DJK) or, the Protestant sports clubs, Eichenkreuz. However, the reality is that these approaches simply do not correspond to the expectations of today's result-oriented society.

### *3. Specific problems in Germany*

The problem in Germany is more serious than in most other countries. Perhaps it is because between 1966 and 1976, the birth rate was halved, meaning fewer talents for competitive sports. Yet today many more types of sports are played and thus different sports compete for talent. Additionally, opportunities for destructive behaviors have increased, thus there are many more – legal and illegal - medications and methods that trainers can try to use in an effort to improve performances.

The overall performances of German national teams in the Olympics are much lower today than they were 20 or 30 years ago. Many more countries are competing in World Championships or the Olym-

pic games, such as China, Kenya or Ethiopia. In response to these contributing factors, why don't we see changes in the expectations of politicians, the media, the general public, or sports organizations to help ensure a chance for clear and fair sports?

4. *What we can see in the past*

The heads of different sports federations were able to see these trends developing, yet most of them did not want to see it. They wanted to see the results, but not in the way in which the results were obtained. They ignored the most obvious and surprising improvements in sport in a variety of situations. One example can be seen in an elite female shot put competitor, where there was a clear difference in her physical appearance (increase in muscle mass and other masculine features) in the two years just prior to winning the European Championship. It was clear how it happened, but the Federation did not react; the Federation did not want to know how the result was obtained, even though experts would agree that the use of anabolic steroids is probable.

When experts examine performance development, it is possible to see significant developments. These developments can be seen towards the end of the fifties in the throwing events, as well as the middle and long distance disciplines since the end of the eighties. Again, from 1994-1995 on, there were signs of significant improvements in long distance sports. A possible explanation for this can be seen in an interview given during the Festina scandal in 1998: the director of a French cycling team said that the doctors had found a solution for the negative effects of erythropoietin (thickening of the blood) by giving medication blood dilution to the athletes. This knowledge was transferred rapidly to other sports for example, to athletics, with the result of an enormous increase of performances.

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Another specific example can be seen in the difference between the first time a marathon runner had a performance of less than 2'10' hours in 1979 and times that are 175 times faster in 2012. What was the reaction of the International Federation? Nothing!

It is often the case that the reports of International Federations are redacted to avoid corruption cases. Furthermore, many do not want to see such developments, such as the presidents of these institutions.

*5. Pills as miracles*

We know that young middle-distance runners from the region of Heidelberg swallow about six to eight Aspirin per day before training and before competition. A lot of handball players take *Voltaren* before each training session, often four pills, which can put the health of their kidneys at risk. In our society it has become normal to consume pills every day and now the same can be said for sports. This response is typical of doping convention cases, because when taking pills is normal in society there are a lot of sportswomen and sportsmen are able to argue, "Why don't we have the right to take pills as well?"

Another example can be seen by looking at reports of substances taken by sportsmen in the final 48 hours prior to competition. In one particular case, a German athlete reported taking over two dozen substances prior to competition. Yet, since none of these substances were considered illegal, the conclusion of the report was *keine*, meaning that no illegal substances were taken.

*6. False consequences of the situation*

Consequences resulting from a smaller population of talent to participate in sports include early specialization and increased amounts

of training. While these trends are prevalent in Germany, it is likely that they exist elsewhere. German researcher Karl Feige found in the 1950s that early specialization and high-level competition lead to a shorter career.<sup>3</sup> The same results were found in research conducted by Arne Güllich:<sup>4</sup> an excessively premature support of talents reduces the potential for successful performance later on. This means that success is very likely for those who enter sports later on; most successful sportsmen are not supported to begin very early. For example, in the '60s, there were no athletics championships for athletes younger than 16 years old. Today, you have championships for ten-year-olds, and in some other sports even younger than this.

#### 7. *Doping situation in Germany*

For elite sports, research done by Perikles Simon and Heiko Striegel (Tübingen) shows that 7% of young athletes that belong to national teams under 18 years old admit to illegal substance abuse and 30% of adult athletes report abuse of illegal substances or methods. Yet controls organized by the national anti-doping agency report that only 1% of samples return positive, so there is a big difference between the use of substances and the result of controls. The conclusions are as follows: there are more athletes who dope than the numbers of positive controls suggest, and the education that only explains the anti-doping rules to athletes has nearly no effect on doping mentality.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. K. FEIGE, *Vergleichende Studien zur Leistungsentwicklung von Spitzensportlern. Problematik, Methode, Interpretation, Leistungskurvenanalysen von Hochleistungsschwimmern (Innen)*. Schorndorf: Hofmann (Verlag) 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. GÜLLICH, *Training – Förderung – Erfolg. Steuerungsannahmen und empirische Befunde*. Habilitationsschrift, Universität des Saarlandes, 2007.

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“Doping mentality” means the willingness to expand one’s natural boundaries by any means in order to get the best out of oneself, regardless of the consequences. The mentality can start developing in early childhood, supported by taking vitamins, supplements, painkillers, or the use of pharmaceutical drugs to sustain performance. There is the subjective theory that “if I don’t take anything, I am not ready to perform.” The development of a *doping mentality* doesn’t start at the age of 18 or 20, yet in some ways it develops but much earlier, sometimes at the age of three or four years old, as a result of taking pills on a regular basis.

8. *Problems in the fight against doping*

In research done in a region of Germany<sup>5</sup> concerning the problems in the fight against doping, coaches were asked if they provide any doping prevention education. Most of them answered, “We already have so many tasks, and now we should do doping-prevention in addition? That’s too much for us.” Additionally, they felt a lack of competence: “We don’t have enough education for this task”; the awareness of the problem was nearly non-existent: “Doping plays no role in my sport or my field”. They always say, “You should do it for the cycling federation, the swimming federation, or perhaps in the athletic federation, but not in my sport.” They also express a feeling of unfairness: “Only Germany is so stupid to spend so much energy in the fight against doping.” I have heard the same answers in France: “Only France is so stupid”, and the same answers in Switzerland, in Austria, and in other countries.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. SINGLER, ‘*Dopingprävention – Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*’, Aachen 2011.

Another problem: most coaches think that doping issues need to be resolved at the top by major sports organizations. That means that coaches at the club and regional levels don't feel the responsibility to do something, they set the task on a national level. Or another response is often: "We have no chance against the developing doping mentality. That's the task of the parents". These responses reflect that there is a lot of resistance against good doping prevention.

*9. Other problems in the fight against doping*

Sports can be seen as both a friendship and liability: one does not hurt a friend or cause problems for him or her, even if he or she did something awfully wrong. A personal example is when I saw the young German athlete Birgit Dressel two months before she died in 1987 and could tell she was doping by the shape her body was in. I knew her very well, yet I didn't dare to speak to her because I was a good friend and I didn't want to provoke any problems. A pharmaceutical specialist, Horst Klehr, was more courageous than me, he said to her, "Stop being crazy. Stop the abuse of doping medicaments". She answered, "All can be changed later on." But death couldn't be changed.

Sports fanaticism can blur one's vision, such as love for the sports one does or for idols like Jan Ulrich, Lance Armstrong or Marion Jones. It is often said, "accusations make the sports family look dirty," that's why we shouldn't speak of it. Perhaps the biggest problem in the fight against doping is the individualization of single cases, in which the athlete is always deemed guilty. Therefore the 'system' and the people around him are innocent, and for them change does not seem necessary.

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DOPING PREVENTION: A CONTRIBUTION TO VALUE-ORIENTED SPORT

I argue that we should cut the implementation of controls in half, as it would still be enough to deter young athletes from doping. The quantity of doping controls does not prove that an athlete is clean (see the examples of all the negative controls of Lance Armstrong or Marion Jones). The money saved by this proposal should be spent on research and doping-prevention education for young athletes. I also suggest that doping-prevention be done at a young age, because if someone dopes, for example, at the age of 30, doping prevention would simply not make sense.

Doping-prevention must start with teenagers by providing them with information about the side-effects of doping and medicaments, about the rules on doping and the awareness of the problem. Thus, they may acquire the ability to reflect, argue, decide, and take on responsibility for all of their actions, and will be fully aware of the following conclusion if they choose to dope nonetheless: "You, yourself, are responsible; it is not the responsibility of your coach, or of the Federation. If you have had doping prevention training, you, yourself, are responsible." However, most sporting federations don't do training like this; they give information concerning the rules and procedures of doping controls.

There are a number of key messages that should be relayed to young athletes during doping prevention education. This should start with the encouragement of high performance sports while denouncing the abnormal obsession with appearance and success. Athletes should also be encouraged to respect their illnesses and limitations, make their own decisions, and understand their individual responsibilities. Furthermore, they should appreciate that winning and losing are both equally important experiences and should be able to recognize, reflect upon, and communicate this individually.

1. *Concepts for doping prevention*

There are different concepts used in doping prevention education. The *first concept*, which is used most often, is that of creating fear. An example of this could be showing pictures of Marco Pantani (professional cyclist, winner of the Tour de France 1998 who died in 2004) or of Tom Simpson (professional cyclist who died during the Tour de France 1967 climbing up to Mont Ventoux). The assertion that “doping is a risk for your health” isn’t important for young people at the age of 18 or 20. Life seems to be endless, and what will be in 30, 40 or 50 years isn’t important. In fact, risks often serve as temptations for young people. The *second concept* is an instruction based on a moral attitude: “The one who dopes is evil,” which unfortunately has shown to be less important for young people. The *third concept*, used by most federations, is information: “Doping is betrayal and manipulation.” Major issues are addressed through the explanation of anti-doping rules, the procedure of doping control, and the side effects of doping through oral presentations. However, for most young people, information provided using this method goes in one ear and out the other and has no real effect. Relaying this information through activities, on the other hand, are usually more well received by the public.

In Heidelberg, we use an approach with young people provokes them to reflect, to learn, to discuss, to decide, and to feel responsible for their actions. Thus, the message promoted is that one should participate in sports so that the body stays in balance in such a way that all activities make sense during the whole lifespan of the person. The main goal of this approach is the promotion of maturity. This requires the use of natural resources to prepare children and teenagers for situations of temptation and to teach them how to deal with situations where high performance is expected, along with lessons in dealing with performance limits and failures.

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The most important concern for doping prevention is behavior prevention, yet there are also many concerns surrounding conditional prevention. Most people already involved in doping at different levels are unwilling to change their attitudes. However, in order to effectively prevent doping, it is essential to act on all different levels, and not only at the level of the athletes.

The goal for athletes ought to be formulated in this way: The elite athlete is informed and can reflect on himself, can argue and feel responsible for his decisions, and can perform sports in a meaningful way with his body in mind while taking his entire lifespan into account. Thus, there should be no reason to take too many risks.

An example of the Heidelberg approach can be seen in a case involving a coach that proposed methods to the German Olympic Committee and the Swimming Federation in order to improve athlete performances in 1976. The proposal was pumping air inside the intestine through the anus:

“In 1976, an outsider of the federation offered swimmers representing West Germany a method to improve the position of the body in the water; according to him, it could help the swimmers be faster. The method proposed involved pumping air inside the intestine through the anus. Several high-ranking specialists evaluated the method and ultimately the head of the commission for high-level sports, Mr. Helmut Meyer, gave that information to people who might be interested. The famous specialist in sports medicine, Prof. Dr. Nöcker tested the method himself. Another famous doctor and president of the scientific commission of the national Olympic committee, Prof. Dr. Keul, said that this method was not detrimental to the swimmer’s health. Dr. Donike, who later became the director of the national doping control center in Cologne, confirmed that the method was not against the existing doping rules. The administration responsible for high-level sports in the German ministry was ready to give the DM

250,000 (around €125,000) the creator of the method. Furthermore, the heads of the Federation agreed to a DM 100,000 (about €50,000) fine if confidentiality was breached (if information was leaked to the media). The general secretary of the national Olympic committee, Mr. Walter Tröger, and the general secretary of the German Sports Federation (DSB), Mr. Walter Gieseler, had also been informed. Thus, the doctors of the West-German Olympic team offered to help pump the air through the anuses of the swimmers. Only one of the head officials, Mr. Fallak, spoke out against the use of this method. Meanwhile, other people in charge pressured the heads and the coaches into using it. Very few of them refused.”<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that nearly no one was against the utilization of this method. The method was utilized during the preparation camp and throughout the 1976 Olympic games in Montreal.

This example can be used in seminars with young people. You can divide the participants into two groups who are given the opportunity to elaborate and provide their own arguments:

Participants assigned to *group A* will be asked to respond to the following statements:

Our country needs heroes (role models for the youth) and medals (to show how great the nation is); Anything that is possible must be put into practice; Anything that is not prohibited by the law and makes improvement possible must be used; The competition between nations is very harsh; To have the upper hand against other countries, creativity is necessary; Giving up the approaches “Our country needs heroes and medals” and “any available tool should be used” would entail the following consequences...

<sup>6</sup> A. SINGLER, G. TREUTLEIN, *Doping in West-Germany*, in: G. SPITZER (ed.), *Doping and Doping Control in Europe*, Oxford 2006, 88-114.

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Participants assigned to *group B* will be asked to respond to the following statements:

The individual (and personal growth) of an athlete is more important than bringing medals home; Even though it is interesting to test one's limits, we shouldn't do everything that is technically possible; The personal development of young athletes should be the priority in competitive sports; Giving up the approach "The individual and personal growth of an athlete is more important than bringing medals home" would mean ...

In the end, there would be a debate between two members from group A and B. They would be required to discuss and exchange arguments in a way that is similar to a situation they may face in a competition. Who will be the winner of this debate? It has been found that young people are more likely to favor the position that personality development is very important. Meanwhile, winning medals is much more important for adults than young people.

*2. Settings of temptations*

Research conducted at the end of the 1990s revealed that there are a number of settings in which the temptation for doping exists. These include: transferring to a new, more result-oriented club, failure in performance, serious injuries, interaction with other competitors who dope, and the fear of 'social death'. Thus, doping prevention education should also include preparation against temptation settings.

*3. Junior ambassadors for doping prevention – Peer to peer education*

In the German Sports Youth Federation, we take a special approach for doping prevention with the use of 'Junior Ambassadors'. Ultimately, these young people would have a positive influence on

their peer groups and serve as models for an honest life of an athlete. Furthermore, they can inform, consult, and motivate their peers to think critically about the consequences of doping, can ensure that educational materials are available to the public, and can collaborate with anyone who is active in doping prevention.

MAJOR ISSUES	GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regain consciousness of the problem</li><li>• Food supplements and pain killers</li><li>• Development of doping mentality</li><li>• How to advise athletes to act and react in situations of pressure or temptation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To motivate the organization of workshops on prevention in sports organizations, sports clubs and in schools</li><li>• Suggestions for content and methods to be used</li><li>• Involve oneself in the planning of the event</li><li>• Make clear statements in the fight against doping</li><li>• To be aware that they are models for youth</li></ul>

People who provide doping prevention education should refer to interactive methods.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO ACT

Sandro Donati, who has done a lot to combat doping in Italy, asserts that athletes involved in competitive sports should be educated not to be champions but to have fun playing sports. They should also be taught to allow for and expect mistakes, to balance their athletic lives with their academic and professional obligations, and finally to

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consider their own individual improvements as the most important success.

Professional recommendations regarding how to respond to doping problems in major sports include education and prevention from the bottom up, education of doping prevention specialists, advocating for a restriction on advertising by pharmaceutical, alcohol, and gambling companies, both inside and outside organized sports. Furthermore, it is also important to educate doping prevention specialists, which we do not currently have in Germany. Finally, it is important to ensure that politicians and sports federations maintain a clear position to their athletes and to the public: clean sports are more important than top-level results.



## Training the coach and coaching the trainer

RAY MCKENNA\*

I would like to start by examining the importance of the coach in modern sport, discuss ways the Church may better serve the coach, highlight some examples of how coaches can be Gospel witnesses, and discuss how coaches are influencing players and their communities for good. My goal is to provide a compelling case for the proposition that a coach can and should incorporate the Gospel message into his or her coaching approach and that by doing so, he or she will increase the chances for success.

The coach stands as the visible face and very manifestation of the team and also a connective tissue between the players and the management. It is often stated that a coach, as coach, has never scored a goal, crossed a finish line, hit a ball, or done anything measurable to win a game. Yet, no one could imagine the sheer anarchy and chaos that would result without a coach. For anyone who has ever played sports, the term “coach” has special resonance. It may be packed with strong positive or negative connotations based on our experiences, but nonetheless, the very thought of a former coach evokes strong emotions many years after he or she had a presence in our lives. As such, his or her visibility and influence is quite considerable in the sporting world.

Beyond the athletic field, the term “coach” is being increasingly applied in scholastic settings and in the corporate world. Today, even

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*Ray McKenna*

individuals employ so-called life coaches to guide them in making personal decisions. Most large corporations utilize leadership training so their brand message percolates to all of the organization and even to its consumers. They refer to this phenomenon as “the multiplier effect”. In sports, the multiplier effect of the coach is enormous as it not only percolates to the whole team but even to the general public because of the widespread interest in sports.

I am honored to be able to speak on the importance of coaches and also to have been associated with the Church and Sport Section of the Pontifical Council for the Laity since almost the very founding of the office by Pope John Paul II in 2004. I remember the excellent introduction by His Eminence Cardinal Ryłko in 2005 at our very first conference echoing St. John Paul II in proclaiming Sports as a Christian mission field. I remember Bishop Clemens noted how the Church’s teachings on the human person would be essential to evangelize the world of sport. Pope Benedict XVI offered his insights on how Christ and the Church must enlighten every aspect of humanity including sports. Over the years, these conferences have provided the important testimony of noted theologians, philosophers, and scholars on the role of the mission of the Church in sports. Further, athletes, coaches, and other sports participants have provided real and genuine insights from the field of play.

We hope and pray that our discussions surrounding these themes will bring us further down the road of integrating the essential teachings of the Church into the world of sports. Later on, I will turn to one of our greatest weapons against evil – the virtue of humility – and re-examine how we may improve our evangelization efforts in the world of sports. As such, I humbly suggest we have much to learn from the secular world about its methodology for influencing sports.

The athletic brand Nike understands athletes as people and therefore has crafted an appealing and accepted message that captures the

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sporting world's imagination. Nike founder Phil Knight, for example, refers to anyone with a body as an athlete. An interesting, provocative, and enlightening description we should take to heart.<sup>1</sup>

It is not a coincidence that St. John Paul II developed a rich and beautiful theology of the body and also founded the Pontifical Council for the Laity. He had a passion for enlightening the world of sports with the divine plan for harmonizing body, mind, and soul as athletes for Christ. Since Nike's foundational principle also starts with the body, it is not terribly surprising that Nike adopts, if not expropriates, Christian principles and values to promote its products. For example, its well-known "Just Do It" slogan is but another way of paraphrasing St. Francis of Assisi's advice to "preach the Gospel at all times, when necessary use words." In 2007, Nike launched a "Witness" marketing campaign featured NBA superstar LeBron James. The specific phrase used was "We are all witnesses". Indeed we are but perhaps to even a greater presence than LeBron. Especially ironic, one of the most well-known and successful Nike slogans and campaign is simply called "cross-training". It does not take a lot of imagination to see the Christocentric aspect and appeal of this term in sports. In the course of this presentation, I will interject thoughts and suggestions of ways we should reclaim these Christological references and allusions for sport ministry and evangelization.

Catholic Athletes for Christ is a Catholic sports ministry, which serves professional sporting teams in the United States by providing the sacraments of the Church through a cadre of engaged and charismatic priest chaplains. Without this ministry, most coaches and players would not have the ability to attend Sunday Mass because of the all-consuming nature of professional sports. As a practical matter, it is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. B. BATCHELOR, S. STODDAR, *The 1980s*, Westport 2007, 41.

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the coach who decides whether to have a chaplain at all and then who to select for that role. So clearly there is a symbiotic relationship; we can only serve the team to the extent we are permitted by the coach to serve.

Our ministry experience suggests there is no substitute for the presence of the priest chaplains (or even our lay evangelists) with the team. This harkens back again to St. Francis's pithy saying about preaching through actions in addition to the explicit preaching of the Gospel. The chaplain's ministry hopefully evolves beyond providing just the sacraments to being a visible sign of Christ and the Church for all aspects of the team's work. For example, Catholic Athletes for Christ Board Member and Green Bay Packers Chaplain Father Jim Baraniak is a continuing presence in the locker room, on the practice field, and during the game in Green Bay. Father Jim's brilliant white Norbertine habit is a very visible presence of Christ on the sidelines during the game and his garb reminds some of himself! Father Jim has become a close and trusted advisor to every Green Bay Packers head coach he has served in almost 20 years of sports ministry. As such, he and the other priest chaplains serve an invaluable role in assisting the coach perform his duties and carry out his responsibilities.

Catholic Athletes for Christ Board Members and friends, Coach Jack Del Rio of the NFL's Oakland Raiders and his wife Linda, have not only made selection of their priest chaplain a priority but have taken numerous other explicit steps to ensure their team will be infused with a strong foundation of faith. They have done this by selecting assistant coaches of great character and virtue, encouraging these coaches to transmit a strong faith-based message to the team and engaging in numerous charitable giving events including with the Knights of Columbus and other faith based charities. As such, the Del Rios serve as a shining example for other Catholic coaches to consider in fully utilizing the bully pulpit they have been blessed to occupy. Further-

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more, they are personally courageous witnesses for Christ speaking explicitly about their Catholic faith and also implementing it to address many of the problems such as use of illegal drugs and domestic spousal abuse that have plagued the NFL in the recent years.

As the Del Rios understand, a coach has an almost unequaled platform for good because of the visibility of a professional team. Coach Bill Lazor of the Miami Dolphins shared with me a story to relate to all of you today, which I believe emphasizes this point. Many years ago as a young coach with a strong desire to evangelize he asked his parish priest whether he could serve Christ better by leaving the coaching profession to become a youth minister. The priest counseled him to remain in coaching with the sage advice that youth ministers all over the world would love to have the opportunity afforded him as coach to speak to a group of youngsters who are eager to hear his every word. A coach at all levels gives his almost undivided attention and respect of young men and women. Hardly any other profession or walk of life can claim such an opportunity to witness to young impressionable minds. Here again we can recall the Nike “Witness” marketing campaign and see the immediate parallel: LeBron James and the coach of a team have captured an “audience through sports”. In the context of my presentation and our conference, we certainly hope the coach’s witness goes beyond selling athletic shoes and apparel.

Legendary collegiate basketball coach John Wooden, who won 10 national championships in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s with UCLA, saw this platform as an opportunity to mentor his players and preferred being thought of as a teacher more than as coach. Wooden’s own “mentors” were St. Teresa of Calcutta and Abraham Lincoln. He read every book about them he could find and tried to apply their lessons for life to his team and all the young men who he coached over his 29-year coaching career. Even though he was widely acclaimed as one of the most successful coaches of all time, Wooden

embraced Mother Teresa's adage, "that we cannot do great things but only small things for God." From both St. Teresa and Abraham Lincoln, Wooden learned, and then taught, humility and most especially placing concern for others ahead of your own personal well-being.

At the age of 72, Jack McKeon led Major League Baseball's Florida Marlins to a World Series championship in 2003. Jack is a daily communicant and Catholic Athletes for Christ member who shared with me that he always viewed success more in terms of the personal and spiritual development of his players than by his record for wins and losses. He publicly speaks about his intense devotion to St. Therese of Lisieux. McKeon tells that when he has a tough decision to make it is "The Little Flower" whom he asks for guidance.

The mentors chosen by Wooden and McKeon provide a helpful model to us as we try to serve the coaching community to assist them to serve their teams and the world of sport. The previously mentioned Coach Lazor surprised a group of our priest chaplains and me one day by sharing with us that he was reading the works of St. John of the Cross and trying to apply them to his football life. (He did not offer any specifics, but we assumed his team may have been dealing with adversity.)

The important lesson for us then is philosophers, politicians, theologians, teachers, pontiffs, and, of course, saints can and should be mentors for sports even though many of these "role models" never stepped on a playing field. St. Sebastian, the patron saint for sport, did not play or coach as far as we know but he was no doubt an athlete for Christ. As an early martyr for the faith, he was literally a witness for Christ. Again, when the platform of coach is used to witness to faith, eternal truths, and virtues, the world of sports is edified and uplifted.

The influence of the coach can be something that stays with an athlete his whole life. Darrell Miller, another Catholic Athletes for Christ Board Member and former professional baseball player, speaks

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with love and admiration of his collegiate coach whose lessons of life impacted him his whole life. Darrell speaks movingly of how his coach preached a message of reaching out to others and always reflecting upon the fact that our actions, behaviors, and character traits will influence at least one person and probably more each day. This message took root with Darrell to such an extent that he now heads Major League Baseball's Urban Youth Academy. The mission of the academy is to reinvigorate baseball in the most impoverished sections of inner city America. Each and every day, Darrell positively influences future professional players because his coach influenced him so greatly over three decades ago.

One of the most successful American football coaches of all time – Amos Alonzo Stagg – burned with a desire to be a preacher. Unfortunately he had a severe stammering problem and lacked the most important gift of a preacher – the ability to preach. Again in the tradition of St. Francis, Stagg decided he would “preach” on the athletic field! His character, integrity, and virtue were so widely acclaimed that one day when the officials (referees) did not show up for the game, the opposing team asked Stagg to officiate the game. Stories of his love for his players was innumerable and when asked once if a certain one of his stellar teams was his best of all time, he replied, “Ask me again in 20 years or 30 years when we see what type of men they have become.” Stagg was named coach of the year at 81 years of age and coached athletes until his 96th birthday.

In examining this very important topic of educating coaches and their influence in sports, we must inevitably grapple with the issue of success. We have seen stories of extremely successful coaches who did not equate their value with wins and losses. Yet, at the professional level, and perhaps at the amateur, Olympic, and scholastic levels also, there is tremendous pressure to win. As a practical matter, very few coaches can retain their jobs and platforms if they do not consistently

produce victories on the field. While it is uplifting and refreshing to hear stories of great coaches who were not primarily motivated by winning, they provide little actual solace to a coach whose family's support and well-being depends on his performance on the field.

Certainly, we can offer hope to coaches who face this real dilemma by showing the example of the many historically successful coaches who were sustained by a deep and abiding faith in Christ and a commitment to personal virtue and prayer. Still, the distorting influence of money, entertainment, and power in sports can tempt us to believe these examples of the past are not relevant for today. Father Jim Baraniak offers an interesting and, I believe relevant, story of a personal exchange he recently had with current Green Bay Packers head coach Mike McCarthy. By any measure, McCarthy is quite successful having captured his sports highest prize, the Super Bowl, and almost always bringing his team to post-season competition.

Father Jim noted to McCarthy that all the players on Packers would "run though a brick wall for him." Coach McCarthy absorbed the comment for a moment and instead of dismissing it in a show of false humility, he agreed they would. He then added, "but that is only because I would run through a brick wall for them first!" In other words, Coach McCarthy is saying he loved his players first and therefore they love him.

This brief yet powerful exchange offers us an insight and a road map to addressing the vexing problem of having to win to retain your position. Precisely because the coach loves his players they not only reciprocate, but play harder to win. While most players would play hard to win even if they detested their coach, loving the coach elicits maximum effort and desire on the field. Therefore, if a coach demonstrates his love for team on a daily basis by his actions, his witness may be considered a competitive benefit although the term greatly understates the power of playing your best for another.

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So what you may ask does this mean? I humbly suggest this means everything from a Christian perspective. We know from both Sacred Scripture and experience “God is Love” (*1Jn* 4:8). While it may sound odd and contrived to believe love is an important component for sport – more precisely for winning at sport, it is our bedrock foundation of faith that we must propose as the solution to all problems including those of sports.

Undoubtedly, secular commentators will be tempted to scoff at the suggestion that love (charity) should be the operational principle for sport. However, such skepticism is an opportunity for dialogue. Let us look at the story of another Green Bay Packers head coach – the legendary Vince Lombardi – who is considered to be one of the greatest coaches of all time. Lombardi was a good man and like all of us he had flaws. His coaching style was dictatorial, gruff and demanding, and, on occasion, he was captured uttering profanities on the sideline. No doubt, love is not the first thing most people would think about when they remember Lombardi and his legacy. In fact, the first thing most people think of is a quote attributed to Lombardi on winning: “Winning is not the only thing, winning is everything” (emphasis added). While there is considerable evidence the quote did not originate with Lombardi, it has become accepted in popular lore as his and sadly it has been used by others as a rationalization for breaking the rules, using illegal drugs and doping, and all other types of immoral and illegal acts all in the name of winning.

Vince Lombardi detested any efforts to break the rules in the name of winning and tried to clarify that his “famous” quote on winning was simply meant to say putting forth maximum effort to win is the only thing, not the result of winning. The personal and spiritual side of this coaching legend is unfortunately not well-known. He was a devout practicing Catholic all his life. He served as an altar boy and seriously considered entering the seminary before dedicating his life

to coaching. Even while head coach, he always attended daily Mass and served as the Eucharistic minister at his local parish. When then Packers Chaplain Norbertine Father Dennis Burke was asked by an indignant parishioner how he could allow the profane sideline tyrant of the Packers to distributing the most Holy Eucharist, Father Burke famously replied with a twinkle in his eye, “Can you imagine how much worse his sideline rants would be if he wasn’t going to daily Mass?”

Author David Maraniss provides an excellent description of Lombardi’s inherent Catholicism:

“The current of sports and spirituality within him converge at a deeper point than mere rhetoric. The fundamental principles that he used in coaching – repetition, discipline, clarity, faith, subsuming individual ego to a larger good – were merely an extension of the religious ethic he learned from the Jesuits. In that sense, he made no distinction between the practice of the religion and the sport of football”.<sup>2</sup>

Lombardi was not a proselytizer and he did not invoke God or Sacred Scripture in his locker room talks and may never have told his players he loved them. However, in his own way, Lombardi was preaching the Gospel at all times. It is quite striking and moving to listen to the regard Lombardi’s former players have for the man who was their coach. Almost all speak with deep reverence and sincere love for him. No doubt, as with current Packers coach Mike McCarthy, they loved him because he loved them first.

Volunteer high school football coach Joe Erhmann has been described as the most important coach in the United States. Although a former professional football player, he is an ordained minister and explicitly preaches the gospel of love to his team. His mission state-

<sup>2</sup> D. MARANISS, *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi*, New York 1999, 245.

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ment speaks of helping boys become men of integrity and empathy to change the world for good. He tells his players on a daily basis that he loves them and that they are required to love one another. Ehrmann describes his coaching style as “transformative” as contrasted with the vast majority of “transactional” coaches. He explicitly states and demonstrates he is more concerned with developing men of character who grow to make the world a better place than with wins and losses. His football team has been quite successful on the field also in terms of wins and losses.

In addition to teaching and preaching love, Erhmann also has introduced an expansive view of community that provides a good model for other coaches and teams. It involves an intentional recognition that the teams’ actions have a large ripple effect for both good and evil in the community. We have a similar recognition with the Del Rios in Oakland and their selfless commitment to share their blessings with the less fortunate and to speak unequivocally against social wrongs and bad player behavior. In fact, this empathetic focus fully allows Christian charity to play an intentional role in sports.

Catholic Athletes for Christ, in partnership with the Knights of Columbus, Special Olympics, the NFL, and many coaches and players through the United States have begun working to create a broader understanding and welcoming environment for athletes with both physical and intellectual disabilities to be included in the world of sport. It is through this truly Catholic principle of inclusion rather than exclusion that light of Christ will serve as a beacon for sports.

A sports story from the Special Olympics recounted by Coach Erhmann in his book *Inside Out Coaching* demonstrates how success in sports can be defined in new and uplifting ways.<sup>3</sup> Nine athletes with

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. ERHMANN, *InSide Out Coaching*, New York 2011.

mental disabilities lined up for a 100-meter race as their “huggers” waited at the finish line encouraging them onward. One of racers fell during the race and started to cry. The other eight racers stopped running and went back to comfort to their fallen colleague. A girl with Down’s Syndrome hugged the fallen racer and asked if he was feeling better. All nine competitors held hands and skipped together to the finish line as the crowd cheered loudly. Certainly the definition of “winning” was expanded and refined on the track that day.

Pope Francis has preached often on the Christian obligation to adopt an expansive view of community and of family and he has told us that the family is the “privileged place for the transmission of the faith.”<sup>4</sup> In a very real sense our parents are our first “coaches”. If our families are properly modeled on the Holy Family of Nazareth, they will provide us with a means for salvation. To a great degree even at the professional level in sports, there is much to be gained by reintroducing a familial view of the coach and the players.

Coaches often say their teams and player are like family to them. The 1979 Pittsburgh Pirates won the World Championship of baseball buoyed by the rallying theme “We are Family,” that captured the hearts and the imagination of a city. In the film, “When the Game Stands Tall” viewers can learn the story of legendary De La Salle High School football coach Bob Ladouceur and his team’s incomparable 151-game winning streak. The compelling story of his record winning streak and championships pales in comparison to his insistence players place love for teammates above individual records and accomplishments. As coach Lad states in the film, “Family isn’t just blood relatives.” Indeed, we should see all of our teams as family, as Holy

<sup>4</sup> POPE FRANCIS, *Angelus*, Rio De Janiero, Friday 26 July 2013.

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Families guided by the love of the Holy Trinity – the first family of love.

Perhaps the most enlightening scene of the film takes place when Coach Ladouceur takes the whole team to a veteran's hospital. Much like the story from the Special Olympics race, it captures the essence of community and family better than words can describe. A struggling team filled with big egos and selfish goals and desires becomes transformed as they awaken to the realization that the real heroes in life are those who freely give of themselves to help others. This visit allowed the team to come together in love on the field because they began to grasp the essence of love in the hospital that day.

In summary, we should raise our collective voice to propose a Christian view of coaching and also a Christian perspective on winning and losing. We must proclaim our Christian perspective on sports with great charity but also great confidence because "Cross-Training", properly understood, provides the most valuable lesson in love. Namely, God so loved us he sent his "athlete" Jesus Christ to win our battle with evil and join him in eternity. In doing this, we must rebut the perception that adhering to Christian values and virtues and the full Gospel message is an impediment to success. We do not win despite our faith but because of it! Loving others is the essence of a Christ-centered life and the measure of success here and in eternity. When, and only when, we understand this truth shall we be true athletes for Christ.



# The many influences in the life of a coach: Fame, money, media and family

ANTONIO MANICONE\*

## INTRODUCTION

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my insights on the educational role of coaches. This is a theme that has been important to me for many years, as both a player and in my work as a coach. As a professional soccer player, I had the opportunity to play for diverse Italian teams. Among these teams were Inter, Udinese, Genoa, Perugia, Palermo. Even before I became a professional athlete, I played in a variety of youth and amateur leagues. During my career I earned a physical education degree in ISEF, with a specialization in grassroots activities and wrote a thesis on soccer school. In order to train players at higher levels, I also pursued coaching licenses until finally earning the Masters UEFA PRO at Coverciano, where I earned my degree in 2006.

I have been fortunate enough to be able to coach children of all ages. For many years I was the instructor for Inter Campus, for children from 6-12 years old, and for eight years I coached the Inter youth league for a number of age groups including, 12-15, U16 ('Allievi Regionali'), and U19 ('Primavera'). Currently, I am the assistant coach of the National Swiss Soccer Team, directed by Vladimir Petkovic, and had previously served as the assistant coach to Lazio.

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*Antonio Manicone*

Before I speak of my experience as a coach, I think it is important to share with you a few of my reflections on coaches from when I played soccer. These experiences have helped provide valuable insights both for my work as a coach and in managing individual players and groups.

MY COACHES

*An amateur team from the peripheries of Milan*

The first coach I can remember, from when I was about eight years old, was both kind and serious. From the point of view of the sport, he was great. He was well prepared to coach this age group and, like a father, always took on the greatest responsibilities. He was punctual, made sure the locker rooms were clean, and he held great respect for people's things. He was the first to follow all of the rules that he himself established. He was our model to follow and I later took his example with me during my years as a coach.

Fortunately, this coach did not have many external pressures, neither from society nor from parents. He played the kids who earned playing time, and the few times that he did interact with parents, he always placed the development and improvement of the young player at the center of his attention.

After a few years, from the ages of 14-16, I played in the youth league for an important team in Milan, where for the first time, I began to experience more emotional pressure. The coach acted in this way due to societal and parental pressure. From these years, above all the first year, many hours were dedicated to the tactical strategies on the field and training offensive plays. This may have seen immediate success, but it did not serve much in the long term, as it gave little importance to the cognitive development of the child. In fact, it left little room for ex-

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ercises in which the players needed to think and make quick decisions, which are necessary skills to develop at this age. In my opinion, these skills are important to develop, not only for soccer, but also for mental flexibility, which is the basis of interaction with oneself and others.

The coach put pressure on the players, and if a move was not completed the way he liked there were problems. This was a problem that increased with time, and it made me realize that sometimes coaches make simple things (as seen from an outsider's perspective) more complex and complicated. This pressure can often be attributed to the environment they're in.

I have always had coaches within the youth amateur leagues who experience significant pressure from society immediately after a few negative results. As a result, these coaches continued to implement unnecessary formational changes and work methods that ultimately led to nothing. Children can often recognize the negative emotional state of the coach and is therefore influenced by it. Thus, the child plays poorly and the coach, who doesn't see results, will continue to be placed under societal pressure and the cycle continues.

As I now reflect upon these situations, I must say that they were enriching for the development of my personality. Above all, they created a psychological basis for pressure and stress management. Today, I've asked myself a number of times, what would I have done in those conditions? The answer is not always obvious, but I think for a situation like this, a situation we often find in youth leagues today where victory is an essential element, is to prevent the negative effects. But how? It is important to develop a culture of performance and not a culture that focuses on results. This is important because results often depend on factors that are outside of our control, such as a ball that entered a play just one centimeter too far or too short. Furthermore, it is important to work on the interpersonal relations with the managers of the club.

Parents can also cause problematic conditions in soccer. It is necessary for them to understand that we, along with society, work for the psychophysical development of their children. Therefore, their behavior away from the field should be coherent with the premise: we must create a peaceful and purposeful environment where the only objective is the growth of the child. By creating a situation like this, the coach is able to focus his attention on improving the capacity of the young soccer player and remove other negative elements of training, such as those parents who place unrealistic expectations on their child to become champions.

*The Inter youth league*

At 17 years old, I fulfilled the dream of many young children when I was transferred to a professional youth league, Inter. I immediately felt a big difference from the previous years, especially in the locker room. The relationships between the players and my relationship with the coaches became much more formal. You could tell that the only goal of the group was to continue to play in this league for many years to come. One could clearly notice a diverse style of leadership amongst the different coaches, where the only conditions they had were from the league, or rather from the status of the league. The league held a prestigious reputation, which was almost always one of winning. As a result, the new coaches who arrived felt the pressure and the responsibility to continue this winning tradition.

The coaches I met in this youth league were great educators. They were very rigid in terms of basic life values and also those of soccer. They also had the great mental flexibility to understand delicate moments, which are especially important for youth.

Those in charge of the league considerably reduced the pressure on the coaches because they assumed all responsibility regarding re-

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sults. They wanted, and also demanded from the coaches, that the greatest responsibility be taken in forming the players, and more importantly, in forming men. This was of great importance because whether it is during a game or a difficult life event, the most mature people are the ones who are able to respond, or in this case perform, best in the situation.

*Finally professional: from Licata to Inter*

At the age of 19, I finally made the big leap amongst the professionals, from Milan to Licata, 1500 km from home, which was far away from my family, my friends, and from what I knew. Yet I came with the great desire to play soccer. This was the great motivation that helped me to overcome a number of obstacles, which then seemed as if they were impossible. From that moment, and for 17 years afterwards, I was a professional soccer player, which I should say was a beautiful and unforgettable experience. This was mainly because it allowed me to travel around Italy and was enriched by every person I met and every situation I encountered.

The different ways that my coaches would guide the team and manage the many problems that soccer presents every day influenced my personality as well as the ways I dealt with stress, pressure, and relationships in the future. For example, I knew coaches who would manage difficult situations, such as a relationship with a difficult fan, face to face. I also remember one occasion during a protest when a coach came out of the locker room and verbally confronted 1,000 fans with a loud voice in order to explain his (and the team's) point of view to fight for a common goal, and he succeeded. I also had a coach who maintained a detached relationship with the fans, and thus worked to get ahead on his own and with the team.

*Antonio Manicone*

I still remember, after a home loss, a coach who walked through 2,000 fans without saying a word, straight to the parking lot. This taught me an important lesson: when someone takes on responsibility to their fullest ability, they can tackle any situation head on, at peace with himself and his conscience.

Interactions with fans were only one part of the coaches' daily work, as they also had to manage their relationship with the league, the managers, and the president. There were also different management styles here. Some coaches would handle the president like a snake charmer, but in the long run, when the snake woke up, it wasn't happy. I had coaches who had different attitudes when dealing with the president when he was frustrated after a loss. Some were more assertive, while others preferred to not confront him face to face, which in tense moments can lead to unpleasant situations. These coaches, all with different personalities and the common goal to reach a desired result, helped me understand different approaches to situations.

SOCCER SCHOOL WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

After playing soccer, I began to work as an instructor for Inter Campus with children from 6-12 years old, thanks to a my physical education degree and thesis on the importance of soccer school from an educational standpoint. It is amazing how as I began this experience on the field with the kids, I was reminded of my own memories of kicking at the ball for the first time, memories of childhood dreams, my fears and my hopes. My thesis on soccer school certainly informed me on the psychology and specific needs of children, but it was my own experience as a child soccer player that helped me to understand them. I was able to be gentle when they needed it, but also be tough, like my first coach was, when the moment was right.

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The thing I remember most from this period was having the children all around me, like a mother hen is with her hatched chicks. I was always looking for new ways for them to play and have fun while keeping the psycho-physical objectives of the group in mind. I ensured that what we did contributed to the development of coordination skills, and for the youngest, the development of basic patterns, such as jumping, running, and rolling on the ground. It was also necessary to take the natural self-centeredness of the children into account, and to foster both their autonomy and their discovery of other members of the group in order to be able to play together.

Like all sports, soccer serves as an important platform for social development and building relationships with others. With these categories in mind, I began to work on the skill of collaboration, which I went further to develop in older age groups. Through the game, I tried to explain the importance of companionship and friendship: first there is only “me”, then “me *and* others”, and then “me *with* others”, without sacrificing focus on the individual aspect.

The soccer school instructor for young children must have the sole aim of creating optimal physical and mental conditions for their development, and therefore must create a positive and proactive environment, where children certainly have rights but they also have duties. We need to remember that at this age, children undergo an imprinting that will last for a lifetime. Thus, it is important that they learn that it takes sweat and sacrifice to reach a goal.

The important thing was to provide rules in such a way that each child could follow them; rules that were relatively easy to observe. The rules we provided pertained to order, cleanliness, respect for self and others, and education. Every now and then we added some rules along the way when a need came up, for example in order to promote self-respect, we established the rule that no parent could come and help them when they had to take a shower.

I also always tried to give positive reinforcement to the child in order to indicate the right path while increasing confidence and self-esteem. I continued to strengthen their self-confidence by praising their commitment in everything they did, without letting anything burden them. For me, the important thing was that the child took the initiative and therefore I just had to strengthen it by ensuring that this behavior did not go unnoticed. Thus, I praised the courage to take the initiative, which helped the children discover who they are while ensuring that they do not become discouraged or overconfident.

*What to do with kids*

There are a number of resources available in different mediums regarding the educational methods coaches use for this age group. However, the most important aspects can be found in the use of highly technical language that discusses the relationship between the child and the instructor-educator.

The coach is a crucial figure and reference point that the children see as a model with whom they can identify. (Do not forget that the coach, together with their teacher at school, often has more time in contact with the child than their parents, with few exceptions). The coach has the ability to influence not only the physical, but also the cognitive development of the child, which is most related to his personality. This is the golden age in the life of the child because the greatest psychophysical learning and basic capacity development takes place. It is important that the invitation to be involved in sports should be made in the guise of play. Why through play? Because play is a matter of great ease, in the sense of fun and spontaneity, and it helps increase the level of learning, and allows for socialization and personality development.

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The children were, as I had imagined it would be, hanging on my every word. We know that children learn primarily by imitation, they observe and imitate the type of behavior that they see, so I had to always be ready to do the right thing at the right time. Above all, I kept in mind that children are not small adults and that means that the methodology used and the means of play must be appropriate to their age group.

The children were influenced mainly by two sources: the club and their parents, which also served as two great resources for me. The club, program managers, and especially the other coaches with whom I was in close contact, provided me with more feedback on my activities and, through dialogue, increased my knowledge on the world of children.

A coach for this age group can also serve as a reference for families. Families are the most critical element for children in soccer, as they also condition in the way the coaches organizes some dynamics in the sport. Parents often have high expectations for their children, which unfortunately are not always realistic. This can lead to tension with coaches and can cause the children to have low self-esteem.

However, from another point of view, parents also serve as a very important resource for the coach. I was able to work with the parents who made themselves available to participate in children's activities in a concrete way. Some parents became assistants to the team, while other organized special moments together outside of soccer practice, such as dinners and birthday parties, which allowed for the strengthening of the group and the development of friendships.

Working with parents allowed me to empower them, share their goals (which were often similar), all while continuing to maintain the leadership and technical orientation of the group. If there is true partnership, one is never alone!

*Professional youth league*

The coach of the youth league is like a missionary, in the sense that the great mission, through soccer, is to develop the personality and motor skills of the youth. The coach helps to define the important values in life, knowing that adolescence is a critical age in which children undergo major changes, a period in which the children experience situations more emotionally.

Shortly after I stopped playing, thanks to my time spent as a player at Inter, I began to work as a coach in the youth league, coaching groups of boys between 15-18 years old for eight years, adding to the time I spent doing the same type of work. I must say that having worked with a sports psychologist in the last years of my career as a player was very useful. It gave a technical and scientific meaning to some things that are essential for all sports, including soccer, and focused on aspects including mental visualization, stress management, and the study of interpersonal relations on a practical level.

What I always tried to do from the beginning of the year was to get to know all of the people working in the youth league, especially those who were in close contact with the boys. This allowed me to get a general idea of the soccer environment itself and above all to try to encourage use of a common way of speaking, which should always be positive and proactive. All who are in contact with the players must have the same philosophy, one in which the primary objective of the academy is to develop the best mental and physical abilities of the youth using suitable means. All by giving particular attention to the fact that, in this age group, the developmental age sometimes does not match the actual age.

Without getting into technical commentary on the challenges of this age group, a certain technique that comes to mind, especially in the initial stages of the season, was the importance of getting acquaint-

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ed with each player. I would look for an appropriate time and place to talk, which was usually before or after training, using empathic behavior to establish effective communication.

This type of communication allowed me to know my players better, not only in terms of soccer (what you can see after a few minutes on the field), but about his family, his parents, his siblings, and how school was going. It also informed me on their relationship with the other coaches, their attitudes and who, according to him, had influenced him the most. In short, I wanted to understand how the youth saw things. I did not judge his point of view as wrong or right, because it was a personal point of view. In these conversations with the young people, many shared an individual goal that they wanted to reach by the end of the season, for instance, a forward who aimed to make a certain number of goals. This was important to keep in mind, that individual goals are stronger than those of the team.

The manner of communicating with the youth was critical. I usually tended to spend more time listening to what they said and only to “outline” their position, rarely expressing any judgment, only where it might help to try to see things from another point of view, yet without forcing my opinion. They must have time to process things and, above all, to experience them. In addition to working on the field in a more playful way (almost always using the ball in all of the drills and maintaining an intensity appropriate to their age), I worked with the youth on an individual level. I began to understand how they interacted with each other both on and off the field. Our body communicates better than our speech, and the behavior is therefore rooted in our emotions and our expectations.

Another important aspect that I worked was their self-esteem. I wanted to form young people who would take the initiative and who were not afraid to make mistakes. I always repeated that there are no mistakes, but only experiences. Overall, I tried to help them create a

positive and constructive way of thinking. I told them that the glass should always be seen as half full; an attitude that would be useful not only for soccer but for everyday life and whatever they will do in the future.

Given that the coach is responsible for creating the group, his behavior must be consistent with what he says and does. He should foster a relationship of trust with and among the players, he must enforce the rules equally for all players, even though the decisions must always be made with common sense. Group management is a key element for the coach, who has the task of creating cohesion, keeping in mind that the basis for achieving this goal is respect between individuals. Even before that, self-respect, given that strong individuals can also make the group stronger. Therefore, I worked hard on stressing the importance of working with others without losing one's own identity, working for the team, and learning to relate well by use of common language ("don't be a ball-hog, pass it!"). Thus, I was able to instill the youth with a wider view than their individualistic way of seeing soccer and especially life. The group does not come together because they have the same interests, but because of the willingness of each individual to share their own gifts to achieve a common goal.

These categories are important at every age and level of soccer. They are the same ones used at the national level when professional clubs acquire players from all over Italy. The management of the group becomes more complicated even though leadership is always the winning element of a soccer team. At this level, we often have players who find themselves placed in a very different environment from what they were used to and different from the culture of their countries. For these players, individual aspects should be taken into strong consideration, especially at the beginning of the season. One aspect I worked on with this age group, especially taking into account the different makeup of individual youth, was to create a cohesive

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group starting from their individual needs yet above all sharing a common goal, for example, better team performance.

One factor that I think is important which the coach should dedicate his attention, is on eliminating excuses. Young people often tend to blame external factors as reasons for success or failure. Yet I made it clear to them that they themselves determine their own future, and that all things should be perceived in a positive way, even defeats. We must always ask the question: What have I learned since yesterday, and what can I do to improve? These are personal assessments the youth must learn to do on their own, as always, not only just for soccer, but also for life.

With the team as a whole and with each individual player on the team, I also made it my aim to instill the knowledge that everything we do and say, on and off the field, has to be positive and proactive. It is us, with our inner dialogue, attitude, and actions who make our goals possible and can often influence the achievements of others.

Another key element is the ability to understand the importance of long-range goals and patience. Unfortunately, I found that most young people in the youth leagues expect improved results for their performance within a short time span. However many times, especially for these age groups, there is a need for patience, and the motivation to work and think about the present without losing sight of the final goal.

Over the years, my interest in the school performance of the youth has increased, as when soccer commitments increase, there is a very real possibility that the kids may start to struggle in school. It is very important that the soccer club and parents convey the idea that players who are good at school, training and developing their intellectual capacity, are more likely to be good in soccer. Why? Because soccer is a situational game in which the player must always make de-

cisions depending on the ongoing action of the game, decisions which can often be decisive for its outcome.

With the older kids, those between 18 and 19 years old, I made an effort to emphasize “mental work,” meaning the ability to always be in a state of mental well-being in order to have optimal performance and the ability to handle stress; a real limitation even in this age group. Although the goal was to improve sports performance, I tried to give them tools to overcome different life challenges, particularly those that are not negative or positive, but rather depend on the interpretation that players give them.<sup>1</sup>

A major problem in this age group, which is at the threshold of belonging to a top-level soccer team or playing professional soccer, is money, or rather the emphasis that some players give to it. When players focus on money, everything seems easy and everything seems like it can last forever. One of the things we coaches can do is make it clear to players that money is only a means and not an end.

Outside of soccer, I tried to keep the young people rooted in reality. Many young people in this age group think that they will only become soccer players by focusing their attention and their efforts exclusively on this one objective, which can be reinforced by friends, the press, and agents.

While agents can be a positive influence to increase one’s self-esteem, working with them requires considerable mental balance. The basis from which the youth can answer to this pressure can be found in their educational background, their friends and influences from where they grew up, and in their families. Surely the coach, who is also responsible for the education of the youth, can also do something

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. MANICONE, *Processi di autoregolazione nell’attivazione mentale del calciatore*, in: “Notiziario del settore tecnico”, Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio, n. 6, 2006, 8-14.

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to promote a balanced life for his players. For example, on several occasions I brought the team and staff to visit places such as children's hospital, to schools to give talks, and to participate in charity events. I have found that these events, when offered at an opportune time, can provide a great opportunity for players to think about the true value of life without being influenced by subjective situations of success and failure in the world of soccer.

Conditioning that is presented in a professional academy is almost exclusively related to individual growth, and therefore meeting with and understanding other coaches and/or the head of the youth department is important in order to find the appropriate responses to the numerous questions and objectives regarding youth that may arise throughout the season.

It is common in the youth league, which often presents the opportunity to play against teams with some of the Italy's best young soccer players, the element of victory is seen as important. Thus, it is especially important for coaches to take on the responsibility of winning, and ensure that youth only feel responsible for their individual performances.

As a coach, I always focused my attention on the performance of the boys, while also trying to involve the greatest amount of players available during team undertakings. For me, soccer is fun, and is a game that should remain that way, even if all players have to work to their fullest potential to reach the common goal, to reach the best possible performance.

The pressure of the final result was taken on by the head of the youth league and also by the club, because their primary objective is to move as many players as possible from basic training to the first team, even though they are aware that you cannot do this immediately. Of course, in Italy it is very difficult to move from the youth league to the

first team due to common problems related to club management and the corresponding pressure, especially for teams that are at the top.

In several professional clubs, coaches do not have direct contact with the parents. The element of parents, however, is one of the main resources for the youth, as they positively accompany them on the road to maturity, not just that of soccer. Yet sometimes parents also affect future choices in a negative way. The club's decision to ensure that parents are only permitted to talk to the head of the youth league has taken great pressure off of the coaches and as a result, they are less influenced. Unfortunately, especially for the children, many parents understand soccer as the only chance to achieve their desires, without thinking about the fact that these expectations can be burdens for their children.

How can the problem be improved? We must educate parents regarding the meaning of sports, so they understand that they should be used as an instrument for transmitting social values. It is especially important to make them aware that their behaviors can have a profound effect on the psychological dynamics of their children.

Another component of soccer that deserves considerable of attention, is the role of agents. Agents often serve and an element of disturbance which worsens considerably over the years. With time, the numbers of agents in this profession have increased, thus creating a competition for them to acquire younger and younger players. The problem with agents, is that in some cases, certainly not all, they create unrealistic expectations for players, such as making them believe that they can easily play on the first team, become famous, and earn a lot of money. This creates a kind of complacency for the youth, it is like they play with the handbrake on, only achieving 50% of their potential, not understanding that in order to accomplish anything it takes commitment, determination, and the desire to improve.

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We coaches notice these changes and can sometimes take steps to prevent and counteract them through conversations during team gatherings or with individual players. Therefore, although the presence of agents are often seen as a problem, their existence can also be seen as an additional outlet to gain insight on the young person in terms of his mental and physical growth, a common goal that coaches share.

My experience in this age group was, as always, a time of growth and satisfaction, especially at the end of the season when you are able to see the results of your work and sustained commitment. It is a time where children leave adolescence and begin to become men and you find them different. Not only have they improved from the tactical and technical point of view, but also by growing in their ability to handle an array of situations, how to regulate, how to interact well with others, and how to react during their victories and in their defeats.

#### FIRST TEAM

There is usually only one coach for the first team, who is often seen as the first scapegoat when things go wrong, and serves as the perfect excuse for a club to unload their mistakes on. It is common that in the clubs where this occurs, there is often a lack of emphasis on activities that place the person, human nature, and interpersonal relationships at its core. Meanwhile, a strong and organized club that is respectful of human values and objectives tends to see the coach to have great value. They encourage him when there is a need and protect him when external pressures are exacerbated and become too heavy for a single person.

The approach of the first team is not much different from the other age categories. First, we must analyze the environment in which we operate; all of the people who are in contact with the players must

transmit positivity and serenity. Professionalism and punctuality in work is an expectation for both sides: the players observe everything, and the coach has to give in order to receive. Even if the approach used by the coach is the same everywhere, it changes due to the context in which he works together with the players, the environment, and his evaluation of individual players.

With the first team, communication becomes crucial. Not that it is less important on the other levels, but at this level an even greater skill set and ability to communicate is required on and off the field, in the locker room, or even on the bench with the guys. We know that nonverbal communication (body language) is by far more important than verbal communication. Research has found that people with whom we interact perceive 55% of our messages based on body movement, 38% through voice (volume, tone, and rhythm), while only 7% is communicated by the words we use.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, I always kept in mind that the outcome of my communication with the guys should depend above all on my non-verbal communication. I also realized that the most frequent cause of problems between coaches and players are poor relationships and the coach's inability to motivate. Keep in mind that these causes are four times more frequent than a lack of technical ability. Therefore it is often the case that the cause of a nervous breakdown does not always stem from the anxiety of winning or losing, but often triggered by interpersonal relationships among athletes and coaches.

An essential objective for all coaches should be the promotion of the ability to work together. It is the coach's job to make it clear to the players that it is only by working together with those who share the same goal, and (we always hope) with the help of the club and the fans

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. MEHRABIAN, *Silent Messages*, Belmont 1971.

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(especially at the amateur level), you can obtain unimaginable results, both in sports and in life.

My first year as a professional coach for a first team was in Rome, Lazio, as an assistant coach to Vladimir Petkovic. Having previously spent several years with the youth sector, I continued to have informal talks with the players. I was interested in the individual growth of the players and the group, and hoped to understand their beliefs, their family situation, and their expectations. By doing this, I could share each player's ultimate goals and then share the overall objective with the team.

Goals are very important in the first team, but as we saw in the youth league: it is important to educate the player how to set goals and pursue them with determination and conviction. Referring to this aspect, I would like to mention a very simple exercise that a sports psychologist recommended to me years before as a player. This one thing always stuck with me, it was the metaphor of the broken board (breaking a wooden board, more or less thick, with one stroke of the hand, like in Karate). This exercise is a metaphor for life. We will always find a greater or lesser barrier, but seeing past it (visualizing) with the belief that we can overcome it and understanding that the limits (that are not actually present) are only in our heads, we will always have the ability to overcome any obstacle. There is also a need to increase the self-esteem of the players, which can be done by always speaking in a positive way by using the common language used by the team.

## INFLUENCES

The coach's family is one of his strongest influences. Even when I was the assistant coach at Lazio (alongside such an exemplary person as Vladimir Petkovic), despite having succeeded, I was not fully satisfied because I wasn't able to share this wonderful experience with

my loved ones. Thus, I was happy to accept the transition to the Swiss National Soccer Team (still with Petkovic), because I live in Campione, Italy, an Italian enclave in Swiss territory. In the midst of carrying out my work as a coach, this new job gave me the opportunity to once again share life moments with my wife Tania and my four children. Whether it be waking up early to go over homework, or hearing them talk about how the day went at lunch, or to accompany them to the pool, and so on. We were once again able to experience simple life moments together, which to me represent special moments.

A coach's family, can be a great asset for the coach, as they give great vitality and serenity in good times, but can also support them in the bad times. In first teams, results are often one of the major factors that influence the coach and his players. To reduce this pressure, the task of the coach should be to reduce the importance of victory or defeat. Thus, ensuring that these events serve as passages and moments of growth that are essential for reaching an ultimate goal.

As a coach, I took the responsibility of the outcome upon myself, thus leaving the players the responsibility of their performance. Performance is always something that is concrete and tangible, and the result can sometimes depend on external factors, such as luck, referees, or errors. The pressure in the first teams is not all the same but fluctuates, especially aspects related to the influence of the fans and the involvement of the media.

Fans are the main resource for soccer teams, as they convey a sense of belonging, historical memory, a fighting spirit, and can aid the team in a memorable performance which may remain forever linked to the history of the club. When the fans are on par with the team and the coach, they often form a tight union that is difficult for any external event to break. Fans stop the players and the coaches in the street, and they convey a sense of gratitude for the good performance of the team. When you play and feel the fan's' heartfelt cheers for the players, one

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does not feel fatigue, but more motivated to push further into a mental state of excellence.

However, there are fringe groups of fans that can negatively affect the team and the club, by coming down to the field and asking the team to give move and sometimes even threaten those players who, in their point of view, have not committed enough. These small groups of fans, who often exaggerate with their violent conduct, have nothing to do with the soccer world. They are simply people who try to exploit the situation on a personal level.

Unfortunately, especially as a player, I had to deal with these types of pseudo-fans. Yet in a way, many of them financed the club, as in return for their support, management often covered the costs of the fans to travel and/or for leading the cheering during games. This is a problem that needs to be cut at its roots. We must simply have the courage to do without the support of these fans who, I repeat, have nothing to do with the world of soccer.

Players can represent populations or portions of land (of cities, regions, or countries), which often develops into a strong sense of collective identification with the local people. The problem with this is that many times a spirit of nationalism exists, that can lead to different forms of opposition from nations that may turn into violence. International meetings in particular can lead to violence when they serve as an opportunity to bring out deep-rooted nationalistic rivalries. Clashes between supporters, however, are more usual at the club level, where strong feelings of local and regional identity can find violent expression. In Italy and England, disagreements between the North and South are expressed in soccer. This also occurs in Belgium among the French-speaking and the Flemish, and in Spain between the teams of the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and all of the others. Until recently, European nationalists tended to identify themselves with the ethnic majorities of individual states (for example the English in Brit-

ain and the Castilians in Spain), but today we are seeing a clearer assertion of the ethnic minorities, for example, with Basques and Catalans in Spain who have made significant margins of political autonomy, who now serve as the protagonists of strong nationalist movements.

For a nation to send its representatives to an international competition can be a means to reaffirm its culture and therefore victory gives importance to the nation. In this type of global environment, the coach must effectively ally himself with other factors that contribute to the game, such as the club itself, or with the fans and the media. Together, they can contest this type of phenomenon that unfortunately often has deep historical roots with effects that are difficult to remove. The coach cannot change this type of situation by himself, yet with his own behavior he can insist on respect and fair play, and therefore invite a large number of fans to follow his example.

The influence of the media is another very important element in soccer, especially in larger cities, where newspapers, television, radio, and websites all talk about their respective teams. It is normal that teams receive a steady stream of attention every day, at all hours of the day, when you go out, take a walk, go grocery shopping, or stop to eat. All of which have the ability to influence the players and the coach. As a result, the advice a coach usually gives is to try and find environments and people where there is as little talk as possible of soccer.

The reality is today that unfortunately, both inside and outside the realm of sports, the media plays a significant role that has the ability to affect thousands and sometimes millions of people. For the coach, it is difficult to not be influenced, especially when the constant media pressure has its own personal aims. It is therefore necessary to prepare for the situation, that is, to create a relationship of mutual esteem and respect with the media at the beginning of the season. It is important to clarify one's own objectives and those of the club so that they can be reached, without hiding in the event of a defeat and indeed, searching

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as much as possible to be positive and to avoid unnecessary controversy with journalists. Thus, he is able to protect his players and take responsibility when things do not go well.

The press, however, is another important resource for the coach because by speaking with the media, one has the opportunity to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and give feedback to a large population that reads newspapers or watches television. From this perspective, the media services as a possibility to transmit important values such as respect, consistency, and friendship.

## CONCLUSIONS

The great responsibility that every coach bears makes it necessary that his level of expertise and his capacities be as complete as possible. The coach must be a positive example of ethical values, be able to continuously transmit positive messages and above all, he must make it clear to those who practice this beautiful sport, that soccer should represent only a means and not an end.

Loving the young people so as to understand their situation is fundamental. As we have seen, a coach can foster important values within an athlete through team formation, positive thinking and speech, by giving and receiving trust, providing coherence, by boosting self-esteem, respect for oneself and others, and finally by making both individual and collective goals. The coach is at the base of a social educational project, and together with the family, teachers, and priests, he is an important contributor to the development of the personality and life values of the youth.



## Coach and educator: A life's witness at the service of the human person

GEORGE PELL \*

### INTRODUCTION

I would like to present a few anecdotes, reminiscences, and reflections as a Christian and a Catholic and, please God, as a man with some common sense on the whole world of sport. Sport, of course, is one of the fruits of a substantial amount of freedom. For sports to be played well, you need peace, you need a level of prosperity, you need short and proper working hours so that people have time to relax, and, generally, for sport to be played well, you need good food.

In the 1950's, the Australian Olympic teams did very well. One reason for that is that during the War Years in Europe, good food in many cases was not available to the young people and their opportunities for sport were curtailed. Not for all but for most sports you need adolescents, which can be seen as a comparatively modern invention. For centuries, the world lacked adolescents, as most young people endured the brutal transition from childhood to marriage. Young women were married at 12 or 13. The men (we being slower) generally entered into marriage a bit later: 14, 15, or 16.

The sports we now know – and I don't know how politically correct it is to say this – are largely British and English inventions. It is

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not the time or the place to show that, but it is true. One of the reasons is that school sport was very much encouraged in England from the 1850's, because schools were often chaotic, unruly, and undisciplined. I am quite serious in saying that school sport is generally helpful to discipline, if it is well done, and generally promotes a good school spirit.

Now I have described simple anecdotes and reflections as a lover of sport, a former participant, and coach. The two sports I have coached most have been Australian football and rowing, but I have also coached a little bit of cricket and even a bit of soccer.

I played a lot of tennis until about 10-15 years ago, and I still swim regularly. In fact I was signed to play with a first division Australian football team, but instead I fled to the seminary. I can say seriously that even though I love my sport, I am not sure how good I would have been at the top level. Perhaps I could have made a living talking about sport! In retrospect, I am very glad that I didn't choose to do so because I believe that what I do is much more important than the world of sport.

Sport is enjoyable to most people. Not to everyone, but to most. It brings pleasure. It assists in the development of young people. It is a continuation of the useful desire to play. It should genuinely be a recreation that renews the heart, mind, and body. Therefore, because it is enjoyable, we believe that it is an activity that is blessed by God. This is something that we must always make very clear to our young people. Christianity and Catholicism do not exist to make us miserable. It exists to help with human flourishing and happiness.

Sport is good because it represents achievement. It develops specific skills and proficiencies. With the development of these skills comes self-confidence for young people, which is also very important. I suspect that for every young person who has too much to say there are 9 or 10 who are not going to speak up. Generally we Australians

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have a reputation for speaking up. I think that is good, and generally I have tried to encourage that with the young people whom I've dealt with. I think it is important that schools have a wide variety of sports so that people with different or limited abilities can find a niche somewhere so that they do not have to feel as if they are a loser, or feel as if anything they do they cannot do very well.

*Individual sport*

We humans have evolved from hunters and gatherers who knew how to work on the land. These primitive exercises and activities provided necessary physical exercise for us. Although this lifestyle has changed, exercise is still necessary for our health. Even within my lifetime in Australia, the situation has changed. So much so that the Australian armed forces now have had to change their fitness routines for the recruits who come in because their knees and ankles are not strong enough – they have not been developed enough – to cope with the old series of exercises. Once upon a time, youngsters walked to school. We rode our bikes to school. Now, in Australia, many young people go to school in a car or on a bus.

I very much enjoy watching all high-level sports. So often it is beautiful - the level of skill and mastery required to play is so exciting and interesting to watch. High-level sports also serve as a useful lesson for young people to realize that those extraordinary levels of proficiency are never attained or retained without much hard work. It takes generally years and years of training and hard work. There is a saying in the English language, and certainly in Australia, that sums it up: "No pain, no gain". And that might be a little bit Stoic, but I think it is a useful lesson for life. The scriptures tell us – the book of Genesis – that we have to make our way through the sweat of our brow.

*George Pell*

It should be noted that individual sports should take place within appropriate moral boundaries. So I am not in any sense in favor of the public spectacles that they used to have in the Roman Empire when men and women gladiators sometimes fought one another or fought against animals to the death. On the other hand, I would still be in favor of boxing with big gloves, but I have serious moral reservations, for example, about kickboxing and mixed martial arts- where there are fewer and fewer rules and often very, very violent.

*Team sport*

I would say that I am an even stronger supporter of team sport because of the moral development that it can cultivate when it is done properly. When it is done properly, actions such as lying, cheating, and violence are all discouraged. I do think there is a place for contact sports, but I will touch on that later. Team sport discourages narcissism or old-fashioned selfishness. A good team inspires loyalty in the players and a willingness to sacrifice one's self for the team. With teams –a good, happy, well-managed team –the youngsters and the adults who belong are proud to belong and proud of what they achieve.

Sport can be used as a tool for other aspects of human development. In Australia, I think the best example of this can be seen in Australian football. That is a rather controversial statement for people who like soccer or rugby. Many aboriginals – the local, indigenous Australians –have a fantastic capacity for the sport. Their body skills and aptitudes mean allow them to play Australian football very well, and many of them do. Some coaches have gone out of their way to encourage young aboriginal lads to come and play football, which often brought them out of all sorts of misery.

Absenteeism is a big problem for the Aborigines in Australian schools. Therefore, if they want to train for football, play, be on the

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squad, schools have required that they go to school and achieve some basic level of academic proficiency. I think it is a beautiful and effective way of helping quite a number of these lads. Some of them, of course, do not have the self-discipline to do even that. Yet they are provided with a big incentive.

Many valuable friendships are developed through team sport. Thus, this is why for youth and adolescents, my preference is for school team sports. Now this is sometimes not popular with teachers, especially if they have to work after-hours at school. My teachers did, and at many of the Catholic schools it still happens and I strongly support it. Why do I support school team sport? Because generally the teachers know more about psychology and have more insight into the young people that they are training. They help set sport in a proper perspective. It is not desirable, especially in sport, to "win at all costs".

The moral and personal influence of a good and successful coach can be either positive or negative. Especially if a coach develops a record of winning or of developing skills, he is generally much respected by the people who play for him. Furthermore, if he is a good man, young people tend to understand and appreciate that.

Increasingly in the Western world we have absentee fathers and divorces, and the overall absence of good role models. In elementary education, where there are few male teachers in the schools, the sport coaches - especially the males - have an opportunity to serve as appropriate and helpful models of masculinity and can also serve as father figures for young women.

*Competitive sport*

I am also a strong believer in competitive sport. Since I believe in original sin, I believe there is a flaw in all of us and certainly there is a flaw in us males that one might describe as "male aggression". It is necessary for human progress; to take the show forward, but it needs

benign appropriate channels for expression. So if I could be a little controversial, I am opposed to the feminization of sport for elementary school children and especially for boys. I am opposed to a system that would prevent them from strong physical exercise.

I remember visiting a school where they played a bit of rugby. We had a little religious ceremony and a big strong lad got up and confessed that he did not allow the girls to play rugby with him. Now I think it was a very good thing he did not! The girls could have been hurt, and it certainly would have ruined his game and their games and decreased the opportunities for some sort of male development.

I also believe that competitive sport can serve as very good preparation for life in a democracy, in a meritocracy, and particularly in a democracy that believes in social mobility. Competitive sport is also good for the young, poor, and disadvantaged kids. Furthermore, I think it is also good for very rich kids and aristocrats to learn to lose. Obviously if they are trained to win then that is wonderful, but because they are born into very fortunate economic circumstances they should not have inflated or inaccurate ideas of their capacity vis-à-vis other people. For a strong personality of any class, it is always good to be able to learn to lose as well as to win.

I like telling the story of the wife of a successful lawyer who was telling me that she was strongly opposed to competitive sport, especially for elementary school children. I knew that at the very moment she was telling me this that her husband was conducting competitive exams for graduate lawyers who wanted to go to work in his firm. In other words, young people from every section of society must be encouraged and taught how to compete –to develop the self-confidence to have a go! I know for example that in India it is very difficult to get the untouchables (at the bottom rung), as we say in Australia, to “have a go”. Yet many tribal peoples who are also considered at the ‘bottom of the pile’ outside of the caste system have been encouraged one way

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or another have consequently become much more likely to have initiative and the desire to get ahead. In fact, many of them are becoming Catholics!

It is useful for young people to learn to perform under pressure, and especially to perform under hostile pressure. It is also useful to learn that they must act within a framework of rules. While I wasn't very good at playing cricket, I love watching cricket. It was part of my summer for every year of my life when I lived in Australia. This summer, I will go to England to watch a few days of cricket when the Australians play the English.

Once upon a time, at least in old fashioned Australia where I grew up, if something was done that was considered within the letter of the law but wasn't really proper or honorable, we would say, "that's not cricket." Unfortunately, that has all changed. Now there are immense amounts of money involved in cricket, especially yet not exclusively on the Indian sub-continent. Immense amounts of money are gambled along with a significant amount of corruption. Thus, much of the old framework of laws guiding self-respect and honor have diminished and disappeared, quite sadly.

Another development, which perhaps has always existed, is something that in Australia and England I think we call "sledding", which means that you personally abuse your opponent in competitive sport so that you diminish his capacity to perform. I suppose it has always happened and it probably always will, but sometimes it can be very hurtful and un-Christian. So in Australia, for example, racial sledding has been outlawed. It says something about public standards in Australia that you can make the most disgraceful sexual accusations about another player and that doesn't seem to matter too much, but if you make a racial accusation against another player - that is illegal. It is just a reflection of changing morals.

*George Pell*

Public opinion among players – what development Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg calls “the hidden curriculum” in school – what the players really value in themselves, should be of first importance.<sup>1</sup> It should not be about what they should say to outsiders or to their coach. So if we can cultivate the conviction amongst players that actions such as cheating or lying are not appropriate, then that would be a big help.

For many of us, playing a sport has contributed to the development of self-control. Effective self-control under pressure and provocation can be very useful in many areas of one’s life. Team sport helps us to recognize the limits of our own ability and helps us to learn how to win gracefully and how to lose without “whining”, as we say, or without always complaining. We should encourage young people to rejoice in the superior skills of others, not to be nasty and denigrating others with higher skills, lapsing into the sin of envy or personal hostility because someone else has greater gifts.

### *Team supporters*

What about supporting a soccer team, a cricket team, a baseball team, or any sort of team? I confess that I am a “Romanista” - that means that I am a supporter of the Rome soccer club. I must tell you about my ‘conversion experience’, which took place perhaps 10 years ago when I went with a group of young Italians to the Rome “derby”. There, I wore a big scarf and nobody could tell that I was a priest. We went into one of the poorer sections of the stadium. The accommodation wasn’t particularly comfortable. I was with Rome supporters. There were 20 minutes to go and the score was 3-1 in favor of Lazio.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. KOHLBERG, *Moral Education for a Society in Moral Transition*, in: “Educational Leadership” 33 (1975), 46-54.

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One Roman player had been fouled off. So in a magnificent 20 minutes of football with only 10 players, Roma scored 2 goals and saved the match at 3-all. This was my conversion experience and I have been a 'Romanista' ever since.

Now such group loyalties can be good and useful in societies. Theorists and sociologists like the Englishman Edmund Burke talk about the "small platoons", the mediating parties, the small groups between the massive nation and the family. It is always good for a society to have a number of such groups, and supporting a sporting team is one such example. It is probably more useful now since the extended family is more geographically dispersed. Once upon a time when there was a tribe of relatives within easy contact, one could get that sense of belonging to a mediating group, but this is much less common today.

Teams can build an enhanced national unity. For example, the Irish national rugby team contains players from both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. The Italian national soccer team can also be considered a positive fusion, given how strong and important regional ties are throughout the country. In Australia, there are no clubs named after the nation of Italy. We do however have many regional clubs: Calabresi, Siciliani, Veneti, among others. Thus, this leads me to believe that the Italian soccer team has served a useful purpose.

It is a wonderful blessing to be able to watch these great games on television and listen to them on the radio. It is only something available in the last 60-70 years. Of course international sporting competitions are a vastly preferable alternative to war! Rather than people seeking to fight others in an effort to exalt their nation and their self-importance by violence, international sporting competition is a beneficial alternative. These games also bring great pleasure to all sorts of people, rich and poor. Furthermore, it is known that the world's most famous players can serve as very important role models for young people, either for good or for ill. Thus, if they are publicly

*George Pell*

leading disordered lives, they do not provide a positive example for young people.

#### SPORT AND CATHOLICISM

As mentioned earlier, it is important for young people and outsiders to see that the Christian tradition, and more specifically the Catholic Church, is not opposed to people enjoying themselves. We are not miserable Puritans. We believe in life, love, and laughter. For example, in Australia, we always – at least in my lifetime, and probably earlier – allowed time for Sunday afternoon sport, which Protestant churches certainly did not favor then (of course, that is long gone). Now the pendulum has swung much further. Often now we have sporting competitions or sports training on Sunday mornings. I am thinking particularly in Sydney of the surf groups, the little “nippers”, when they train the young people to surf. Since it often takes place during mass time, it serves as a serious disincentive for young people and families to attend Mass.

I remember some years ago a South American priest who was working as a chaplain at one of our secondary Catholic schools in Melbourne. He rather shocked me by telling me that “sport was the Australian religion” – no longer was it Christianity, but sport. Now I do not think that is entirely true. I am not sure it is generally true, but one of the points that we should make is that sport and Catholicism – sport and following Christ – are not alternatives. We are not like Muslim fundamentalists. For example, in Pakistan, they are very much opposed to the playing of cricket, and some of the finest cricket players in the world are Pakistanis. In fact the greatest center of enthusiasm for cricket now is in the Indian sub-continent.

I do support groups such as Catholic Athletes for Christ. I have participated in masses, including annual masses in both Sydney and

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Melbourne, and with the horse racing community. For some years we tried to have a mass for Aussie Rules footballers. We could get plenty of coaches and plenty of ex-players and plenty of supporters, but not too many players. Some – but not too many – players were prepared to nail their colors to the mast and come along as Catholics to participate in that Mass.

Sport is important and yet subordinate. As St. Paul says, we are living and working for a prize, a crown, that does not fade, that is not in this world. What we are ultimately about, of course, is not sport at all. Should one be able to pray for the victory of your sporting team? Should we dissuade young people from doing so?

For years I coached rowing to young people aged 15 to 18, whom had a very good standard. For a few months each year we would train six times every week, so we really got to know the students. I came from a high school that was very much into sport, in which we used to regularly win all of the sporting competitions in the local area, with one exception: rowing. When we had the big race each year, we used to have a Mass in the morning (this is 50 years ago), and the first crew would serve the Mass. It didn't seem to help us to win. This was the only sport in which we did this (whether because we won all the rest we did not feel we had to pray especially at Mass or not, I don't know, but it is an interesting little sociological factor).

The high point of my coaching career in rowing was when I coached a crew made up of 5 Irish Australians: 3 of them were practicing Catholics and 2 of them were tribal Catholics (very happy to be Catholic but did not worship regularly). One of them had explained to me "Look, we used to be very strong Catholics a couple of generations ago, but it all stopped with my grandfather." Regardless, we had celebrated the Mass – a very simple Mass – and just after this lad said, "I think we should say a decade of the Rosary for victory." So we said together a decade of the Rosary and, of course, the team didn't win.

We then had a very useful and fruitful discussion because he came to me to talk about this failure. It was probably one of the few times he had ever prayed for anything that he wanted himself and it didn't work and so we talked very usefully about the purpose, nature, and consequences of prayer.

I think the moral discipline of persisting in regular training for weeks or months is a very valuable thing. I remember telling a number of people who had trained hard six days a week with me, "You should now realize that you have developed a self-mastery, a self-control, that you can now apply yourself in a similar way to other areas which are even more important" such as study or business. In other words, skills learned from their sport such as self-mastery, self-capacity, and self-confidence can be applied to many other parts of their lives.

I have already said that I do not think sport should be life's first priority. Many players will also say this publicly when their first child is born. They will say "I realize that this puts everything in perspective". This is even more so if they lose a child. They realize that sport is enjoyable, but it is not one of the ultimate things at all.

Sport is a good recreation, but it is not the primary purpose of life. Not so very long ago in Australia, a young international cricketer was killed. The cricket ball is very hard and the fast bowlers can bowl at over 90mph (140-150km/hr). Although players typically wear helmets, he was hit under the helmet in the neck and killed. That is very, very rare in cricket. Yet what was interesting was the public reaction across the nation. He happened to be a Catholic, and he was buried in his old school. The tragedy shocked people, and in turn caused them to think about life. I think it also helped to put sport into a proper perspective.

I have spoken of the importance of losing without complaining and not rejoicing too much in our victories. This is because all of our

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skills and all of our capacities for improvement are gifts from God! And I must say, being an old-fashioned fella, that I don't like it when soccer players score a goal and they're racing around from one end of the ground to the other hugging one another or doing summersaults or these sort of things for the television. Now in moments of great excitement, tension, or when something is particularly important, I can understand this exuberance. I am sure it is only done for television, but it seems to me to be "show-offy". It seems to me a vaunting of self that is a little bit over-the-top.

In contact sport, the rules should be followed scrupulously. I suppose in contact sport, up to a certain level, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is legitimate. However everything should be played be within the rules, and Christian coaches certainly should not recommend acts of vengeance to their players. I knew a successful Australian 'rules' football coach who would tell his players that if they were attacked inappropriately, they were not to return that attack outside of the rules of the game. It was a practical example of Christianity at work: this outlawing of violent, damaging revenge.

## CONCLUSIONS

As a former participant, a former coach, and a continuing sports follower, I remain in favor of sport as a means to health and recreation. Evolution has brought us a set of reactions so that when the adrenaline starts to flow, we are geared up to "fight or to flee". This is part of our nature. It would be a tragedy for the Western world – the world that I belong to – if its young people became too frightened to fight and too fat to flee. Too frightened to fight and too fat to flee. It is not impossible.

It would be beautiful for all of us at the end of our lives if we could say with St. Paul, "I have fought the good fight until the end. I have run the race to the finish. I have kept the faith" (*1Tim* 4:7).



**II. PANEL DISCUSSION**  
**Coaches: A mission towards social inclusion**



## The integrating power of sports for people with disabilities

IRENE VILLA\*

Sports often make the barriers that a person with disabilities sometimes encounters in society vanish. This happens because the practice of sports – beyond personal satisfaction, self-esteem and happiness – provides a high quality of life, health, and assists with the integration into social life. The physical and psychological benefits of sports are infinite.

I played basketball and ice-skated until I was 12 years old. Then, I spent a period of time away from my favorite sports because terrorists placed a bomb in my mother's car and we both underwent amputations; she lost an arm and a leg, and I lost both legs and some fingers. Thanks to the fact that we did not have a bulletproof car, the first miracle happened: the roof of the car was opened as if with a can opener, and we were thrown out from the death trap.

My mother gave me the key: "Daughter, we have two choices: we can curse the terrorists, or decide that our life begins today." I didn't even think about it; I just said, "I was born without legs." I did not have legs, but I had something much more important: love, hope, and optimism.

With all of these tools, along with effort and rehabilitation, I started to take my first steps. There was something that definitively

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marked a turning point. It was magical and fundamental for me to throw myself into my training, to practice kayaking, cycling, diving, paragliding, and rallies.

On an icebreaker boat on the Baltic Sea, something happened. Upon arriving to an area where tourists in wetsuits dive into the water, someone told me, "Wait for us here, since you can't do this." I answered, "I was not going to go, but you just said the magic word. Give me a wetsuit, because I'm going to tell you myself whether I can or cannot." Certainly it was difficult; the wetsuit was hard to squeeze into, the ice was slippery, my legs floated, but it was possible.

I also tried fencing; I even threw myself into a competition, and the surprise was that I ended up being the runner-up in Spain. Yet, without a doubt the sport that captivated me was adaptive skiing. It signified a challenge that became a passion. It is an absolute honor to belong to the first competitive female adaptive skiing team in the world.

It was wonderful to experience the true meaning of camaraderie, discipline, courage, and teamwork. After many races and a lot of training, they selected me to participate in the French Championship. I was happy and finally prepared, but I had a cervical hernia; even though it caused me pain, I did not want to pay attention to it so that I could compete.

The snow was fantastic and the course was perfect. Finally, I would be able to show what I had learned. However, a grave fall led to a dislocated the disk between my C6 and C7 vertebrae and they had to take me to the emergency room and then, on the first plane to Madrid, I underwent emergency surgery.

Once again, with more titanium in my body, I remembered this lesson: what matters is not how many times you fall down, but how many times you get up. Despite the fact that everyone encouraged me to quit the competition, I returned to training when I finally recovered, still with much enthusiasm. Failure teaches you something that

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is hidden by success; sometimes you win and other times you learn. I had to learn that error is also progress, if you decide to face the challenge and prepare yourself even more.

In skiing, just like in life, if you are afraid or insecure, you fall, but if you enjoy and believe in yourself, you win. That was how I started to see all of these results, in France and even the Spanish Cup! By all means there are values in sports, and without which life can become very difficult in certain moments. My principal tools for success include: remaining patient, prudent, disciplined, driven, and active in both activities and in friendships. I also find it fundamental to keep a positive attitude and high –self-esteem.

Wherever the body does not reach, it is the mind that has complete ability. I love to explore the potential of human beings. Since I started competing I realized how important it is to face all types of competition, not just physically, but also mentally. Conviction, self-confidence and, above all, handling psychological pressure, are the strengths of any competitor. In my case, I returned to competition after the birth of my first child; my new accomplishments are thanks to the strength and assurance that my husband, and now my children, have given me. It is true that since I became a mother I try to be more prudent, especially when there are no competitions.

We have just launched a foundation in my name, which is born out of gratitude and with the hope that it will be a driving force toward the integration of people with physical, intellectual, and sensory disabilities into different facets of society such as sports, education or employment. We all have our own history of overcoming difficulties, especially if we decide to face them with courage, enthusiasm, determination and joy. The most important thing is found not on the outside, in something material, nor in other people who have been indispensable in certain moments but are separated from us by destiny or have to go away. Rather, what is truly vital lies within each one of us.



## The coach as an incentive for people with less resources

JAIME FILLOL DURÁN\*

The theme of inclusion through sports has been relevant in both my personal growth as well as my professional career as an athlete, manager, coach, and today as a director of a physical education program. For this reason, I am greatly inspired to speak about the role of the sports coach, in order to give hope to those people who live in conditions of vulnerability and who feel marginalized.

Sports and games can be used as valuable tools for working toward the inclusion of all people from communities, neighborhoods, camps, or slums within a social context. The sports coach is the professional who is capable of advancing this goal. Certainly, it is necessary that the coach possess certain characteristics and motivations. Throughout this presentation I will concentrate principally on his profile, didactics, and methodology. Thus, I hope to lay a foundation for further expositions and specifications according to the various social, psychological, athletic, and pedagogical spheres of the programs we would like to implement.

First, it is necessary to identify the various characteristics of the child, youth, or adult with whom one will work in a sports program that has the goal of social inclusion. We have proposed working with marginalized populations which still have at least a basic level of support, shelter, clothing, food, and community; it is not a population of

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the physically or mentally handicapped, nor a population of immigrants in a condition of extreme poverty.

From this analysis, it can be deduced that we are speaking of an individual with material, formative, affective, emotional, and relational deficiencies, which prevent him from breaking through the barrier that separates him from the activities offered by society that are expected to be accessible to all citizens. This barrier either separates them, makes them feel separated, or they do not have the skills that would permit them a permanent access to education, health and work.

In this context, the coach must understand that his job will consist of strengthening the fundamental bases that the individual is lacking, thus allowing him to fulfill his potential as an individual. These deficiencies must be viewed alongside his personal characteristics of material and emotional insecurity as well as a lack of affection and self-esteem, which translate into a lack of cognitive, communicative, and interpersonal skills.

The primary duty of the coach is to make the individual see and enjoy the beauty of the game, of physical exercise and sports, and to enjoy what is difficult. In addition, the coach is to instill the knowledge that sacrifice, effort, and consistency can allow youth to overcome difficulties. In overcoming these difficulties, the youth will feel fulfilled and accomplished, and that these feelings will provide him with a higher level of happiness. The coach will show the athlete that difficulties are not barriers, but rather challenges that can be conquered. This is a gradual, daily task, which will internally strengthen the individual.

This helps the coach to understand that we are speaking of a well-done sport, a sport that places the formation of the person as its objective, and how it transforms him and those who surround him. The second aspect that must be considered is the notion that sports can serve as an agent of inclusion. In order to accomplish this desired in-

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clusion, the coach must consider that an integral formation includes the body and the intellect, the body and emotion, the body and the soul, all while considering the individual in relation to others, to nature and to God, his Creator.

To have an integral vision of the athlete, it is necessary to recognize the function of stimulation and development of the child, youth, or adult in the game, sport or exercise. Sports are thought to stimulate all possible facets of a person, so as to impact his formation and in turn affect the transformation from a person who receives into a person who contributes.

Sport, as an agent of inclusion, is not compatible with the concept of screening, and thereby requires a change in the sports paradigm. Perhaps we can offer a broader definition of sport in which athletic performance becomes secondary to the primary utilization of sport for the formation of the individual. Today, the tendency towards definition and classification often makes communication difficult and obstructs the attainment of the proposed end goal.

Earlier, I mentioned how a physical education university professor in Chile, with professional and academic training, presented a definition of sport that excluded me. This situation surprised me, since I have always considered myself an athlete. I have played sports all of my life, I continue to play and teach tennis, and I believe and think as an athlete, but the fact that I do not train for competitions had left me outside of his definition. In reality, all levels of athletic participation in a specific sport boost the development of this sport as well as those who play it, in its distinct areas of administration, promotion, diffusion, training and competitions. Therefore, I believe it is important to avoid definitions and classifications of sports that do not allow for diverse expressions of goals, interests, feelings, and motor activities, which make sports be of value to society. These are expressions,

feelings, goals, and exercises that change over time, according to the moment in which the athlete lives.

The conversations surrounding the theme “Coaches: Educating People” initiated by the Pontifical Council for the Laity along with the suggested mission provided to coaches to promote the well-rounded development of their players and society as a whole should be considered a valuable contribution to sports. This moment, in May of 2015, could not have been more appropriate for the analysis of what is happening in sports today.

In the context of inclusion by means of sports, the coach will have to face the difficult task of lowering the profile of competition and performance in favor of a harmonious competition. The goal should not be to win medals or athletic glory, but rather the integral formation of the person.

Thus, it is important to discuss the technical aspects regarding the characteristics of a coach and conditions he must maintain in order to allow for effective learning, where are especially important for those athletes often segregated from society. Studies on learning reveal that the activities, knowledge, and skills that one expects to learn should be transmitted under certain conditions in order to generate a personal desire and intrinsic motivation to learn. At the same time, the trainer or coach ought to present tasks in such a way that the child, youth, or adult may be the protagonist. Thus, through practice and experience along with error and problem resolution, he will continue to cultivate his cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical development.

Among these conditions it should also be considered that the athlete feel valued for who he is, because he is a person who is loved by God. Thus, it is important to offer a context and place that welcomes him for who he is and encourage that he will contribute to the program, while still keeping the doors open for him to go in or out. This

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safe place may possibly be the only safe place for him. He must feel loved.

To this, because it represents a moment or athletic program with the goal of inclusion, a great effort toward the transmission of values, behaviors, virtues and the formation of habits using all of the sources of communication that the project can call upon must be added. Normally these will be family, neighbors, and friends, in addition to the support networks that society offers: schools, primary medical care, community meeting places, etc.

These learning objectives must have an evaluation system with which the coach may periodically check for improvement. All of this transforms the paradigm of the coach. The coach who “educates people” must possess, apart from his connotation as a valid and model coach, some characteristics and competencies distinct from those coaches that focus on triumph and athletic success. For this type of coach, physical and athletic performance is not his objective. He seeks to transform the person who is in need, and to give hope to the one who is hopeless; therefore, he must focus his program and methodology on attaining inclusion.

There are certainly a number of skills, commitments, and types of knowledge that the coach will need to develop throughout his program: with an emphasis on the conviction that he holds regarding the contribution to the individual and to the community that his program offers; having the ability to work as a team and to delegate responsibilities (even if they are of little importance) to a good quantity of participants and collaborators, with the goal of the formation and renewal of leaders within the community.

Additionally, he must be very familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the sport that he offers, and match them to the characteristics of the group with which he is working. This may also be expressed as having knowledge of the culture and psychology of the

sport and how this favors or affects the program. An understandable example would be to know the differences between tennis and soccer in regards to the environment, the learning opportunities that they offer in addition to the motor, physiological, and social characteristics of the individual to accept, reject, or adapt to it.

The fundamental characteristic of the sports coach, in the context of inclusion, is his capacity to love.

Furthermore, it is important to contemplate the methodological aspects that allow for the sound development of the program and for greater possibilities for inclusion. Earlier it was discussed that effective learning is an essential element for making an impact on the foundation of athletes as persons, thereby achieving inclusion. Now it is necessary to examine ways in which this may be accomplished.

The coach often assumes the role of an educator through his sport and, at the same time, as the manager or director of a program. This is important because it will not be possible to make an impact with the necessary force so as to effect such transcendent changes in the person and community if one concentrates exclusively on work on the field in a specific place and time. It is not enough to meet in order to play tennis two hours a day, three days a week, nor even six times a week, since, as previously stated, it is necessary that there be a permanent communicational impact through different sources of communication.

In order to achieve this, the program must be twofold: one that is daily, and another that is nonrecurring. The daily program is that of fieldwork, scheduled weekly and for an extended period of time (which will depend on resources), and the nonrecurring program will contemplate activities with a strong motivational impact. Examples of nonrecurring activities are sports workshops with the participation of an athletic figure, internal tournaments and local and regional meet-

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ings with all of the parallel activities that these meetings permit, and visits to stadiums and important competitions.

The goal of having two types of activities in the same program has to do with the incorporation of the athlete, his family, and the community into the project. In addition to empowering the message of the development of values, virtues, behaviors and habits, there is the goal of developing leaders with the ability to manage in different levels of participation; in this way, not only the athlete on the field benefits from athletics itself, but rather the whole community, allowing in turn for greater possibilities of continuity over time.

While developing these parallel programs, it is necessary to consider all of the alternative adaptations necessary for practicing the sport: spaces, materials, dimensions, measures, heights, implements, game rules, competitions, etc., in order to maintain the interest and continuity of the participants and collaborators.

The coach becomes a director with a global vision of the project. Among other things, he ought to feel responsible for whether the boys go to school, find out why some of them do not return to the program, who are the parents of the athletes that accompany them to the games or the training sessions, verify that the social support networks are active and supportive of the project.

It is without a doubt that he will not be able to do all of this himself, and there arises the need and ability to delegate, to work as a team, and to train instructors from within the community. In sum, daily and nonrecurring work go hand in hand with a communications project that is focused on the integral formation of the person, in which the entire community is the protagonist, under the direction of the coach.

Thus, we can conclude with the understanding that the idea of "Coaches: Educating People" is a beautiful mission. It is a beautiful mission for the coach because it allows him to show how the difficulty that is conquered in sports is parallel to the experience of the life of

*Jaime Fillol Durán*

the person; to realize an athletic school that allows for the connection between daily tasks and the pilgrimage toward eternal life; and finally, by giving love, the coach gives the best of himself, and shows the community a beautiful way to a good end in order to give hope to the hopeless.

## The coach as an inspiration: The John Paul II Foundation for Sport Goa

KENNEDY D'SILVA \*

Christianity and sports have been associated with one another since the first witnesses of Christ started to spread the Gospel. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul wrote, “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified” (1Cor 9:24-27).

St. Paul's opening to and engagement with the Greeks influenced early Christian theologians, who often used athletic imagery as a metaphor for the Christian life.

St. John Paul II addressed the problem of sport with great realism. He was well aware that, “in addition to a sport that helps people, there is another that harms them; in addition to a sport that enhances the body, there is another that degrades it and betrays it; in addition to a sport that pursues noble ideals, there is another that looks only for profit; in addition to a sport that unites, there is another that divides”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the International Convention on the Theme: During the Time of the Jubilee: The Face of Soul and Sport, organized on occasion of the Jubilee of Sports people*, 28 October 2000.

He was deeply convinced that, despite this ambivalence, practicing sport must be considered not only as a source of physical well-being but also as an ideal of a courageous, positive, optimistic life, and as a means whereby individuals and society can fully renew themselves. St. John Paul II always forcefully emphasized the educational value of sport, which can inculcate such important values including the love of life, a spirit of sacrifice, fair play, perseverance, respect for others, friendship, sharing and solidarity.

As a direct response to the formation of the Church and Sport Section of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, requested by Saint John Paul II to promote the Christian vision of sport to the whole world, the Archbishop of Goa and Daman, Most Rev. Filipe Neri Ferrão, instituted the St. John Paul II Foundation for Sports (Goa) in India as an ecclesiastical movement in the Archdiocese of Goa in October 2013.

In our present global and digital world, sport has become a unique universal language through which we can share ideas and values with no distinction between races, languages, cultures, thoughts and beliefs. The foundation was created in order to serve as a catalyst for various initiatives and activities aimed to promote peace and the development of peoples. Hence, our mission at the foundation is “to serve the Children of God (kids, youth and adults) to know, grow and be rooted in Christ through different sports-related activities and trainings; to be empowered to work for community transformation in India”.<sup>2</sup>

The vision of the foundation is “to fulfill the Great Commission (*Mt* 28:19) by empowering the Church to creatively work in partnership with churches and ministries worldwide to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The foundation was established to be an instrument capable of bringing people together from parishes from all

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://www.jp2f4sgoa.org.in/>

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over Goa and especially those Catholics who were not closely associated with the church. It has also been used as a basic vehicle for youth formation.

In response, the foundation has developed several intervention strategies in order to encourage youth from schools, universities, parishes, and small Christian communities in Goa to develop an optimistic view to the values of Christian discipleship to complement rather than compete with the intrinsic values of sports and athletic competition. This newly envisioned tool for evangelism has already started to produce important results and hence the presentation in this seminar will shed light on the various strategies that are being used by the foundation in Goa and several other Dioceses in India.

The 'Kids Games' program, for example, is a worldwide phenomenon that connects children with Jesus using sports, games, the Bible, creativity and fun using an integrated and easy-to-run initiative. It has been a very successful catechism program that is being used in different parishes, schools and small Christian communities across the Archdiocese of Goa. Additional programs include a number of Leadership Training programs, which are conducted by the foundation for seminarians, ongoing priest formation programs, catechists, youth leaders of parishes and small Christian communities in the Archdiocese and in several other Dioceses in India.

Additionally, the foundation conducts several sports events. Most notably, the St. Joseph's Cup soccer tournament for priests and seminarians has attracted more than 180 participants from a number of congregations, including the Dioceses, Pallotines, Salesians, Dominicans, Redemptorists, Capuchians, the Society of the Divine Word, and the Society of the Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier.

The 'Altar Server sports festival' tournament is another initiative organized by the foundation and is one of its key initiatives in association with the Vocation Commission for Diocesan Clergy of the Arch-

diocese. More than 100 parish teams in the boys section and 15 in the girls section have participated with all the participants receiving talks, leading to confessions and then attending the Holy Mass.

The Archbishop's trophy soccer tournament for the Under 30 men category has become the most popular initiative of the foundation organized in collaboration with the Youth Commission of the Archdiocese and has helped all those not involved in the Parish youth Groups to be a part of the Pastoral Sports Ministry Program.

Another notable event, the Expo 2014 Unity World Cup, was a part of the Exposition of St. Francis Xavier held in Goa, India from 22nd of November 2014 to the 4th of January 2015. The event served as a great tool for evangelism and discipleship, as more than 3 million pilgrims from around the world came to visit the exposition over the 44 day period. Ministries, churches, governments, and NGOs used the Exposition as a platform to reach out to the people in different ways. Additionally, 8 Mission Teams representing Brazil, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Portugal, Nigeria, Ghana, Columbia and India participated in the event for the glory of God. Future locations for this event include Colombia in 2016 and Egypt in 2018.

Outreach programs during major sporting events like the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in 2014 and the Lusofonia Games were other strategies used by the foundation to fulfill objectives and Chaplaincy programs for high profile athletes. After the foundation began this initiative, it has been very sought after by various sports clubs.

Yet the highlight amongst all the tournaments offered in the Archdiocese for the clergy and the laity has one thing in common: the training of life skills to participants in an effort to foster positive development and thus contribute to their small Christian communities, schools, colleges and in their work places. It has been designed and therefore well tested by the International Sports Coalition, and can be

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seen as a tool that can be used to make positive change and development a possibility.

We believe, therefore, that the coach should be a member of the clergy who has received training in the Pastoral Apostolate of Sports, a catechist, or perhaps a youth leader who feels as if they have received a calling to serve the Lord through the ministry. In summary, it can be concluded that the pastoral care of sport in the Archdiocese of Goa has been clearly expressed through the John Paul II Foundation for Sports in Goa as an ancillary aspect when compared to the overall pastoral care while remaining in perfect sync with the church's mission. It is in fact well appreciated and accepted as a special pastoral action that is in harmony with the church's initiative in this complex digital world where sports are slowly becoming extinct. The pastoral care which is well understood by the council has put an emphasis on the theological investments, ethical virtues, and values passed upon to its community as a pro-educational stance and an ongoing spiritual cultivation through all of its catechism programs.



## The education of coaches for the development of peoples

SANDRA ALLEN-CRAIG\*

### THE FUTURE IN YOUTH SPORT PROGRAM

The Future in Youth (FIY) sport program is conducted in Baucau, Timor-Leste and is focused on the education and empowerment of our coaches that we hope leads to the support, development, and growth of social inclusion in their community.

Future in Youth is a capacity building program, which uses sport to help build health, wellbeing and life skills for the people of Baucau in Timor-Leste. Future in Youth engages and educates volunteer coaches to promote key messages of health, wellbeing, and life skills through sport. There are two key components to the Future in Youth program: coach education for volunteers in the community and sport education program for youth. Over the past 5 years, approximately 4,500 youth and 250 volunteer coaches have participated in the Future in Youth program.

### *Timor-Leste*

Australia is one of Timor-Leste's closest neighbors and it has worked alongside the Timorese people since withdrawal of Indonesia

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*Sandra Allen-Craig*

in 1999. Timor-Leste gained independence in 2002, yet during their struggle for independence most of the country's infrastructure was destroyed, including the destruction of 95% of its schools. Timor-Leste has a very large population of young people with 53% of its population under the age of 18. It is a developing nation with 37% of its population living below the poverty line. The education of its people has been severely disrupted during the many years of occupation leading to an illiteracy rate of 50% of the population. Life expectancy at birth is 62.5 years and 40% of the population is malnourished.<sup>1</sup>

### *Opportunities to engage youth*

The Australian Catholic University (ACU) first ran the Future in Youth program in 2010. The university was approached, through the Salesian Brothers of Baucau in Timor-Leste, to see if we could offer assistance to their village that was having problems with outbreaks of violence between youth gangs in their community. Many of the youth of Baucau, at the time, were not engaged in full time schooling. There were also high levels of youth unemployment and very few opportunities for youth to participate in other sporting or recreational activities.

Participation in a sport program was identified as a way to engage the youth in alternative activities to martial arts gangs and violence. Soccer was chosen as the sport that would have the highest engagement from the community as it is the most widely supported and played sport in Timor-Leste. The education and training of volunteers from the community to help deliver the program was considered vital to the program's success. The training of coaches enabled the engage-

<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, *Human Development Report, 2013*.

### *The education of coaches for the development of peoples*

ment of a wide range of community members and has proved to be a fundamental component of capacity building within the community.

#### *Health, wellbeing and life skills*

The Future in Youth program promotes aspects of health, wellbeing and life skills for all participants and coaches through the education, development, and reinforcement of 3 core principles of 'fun', 'fair' and 'respect' which underpin the program. These underpinning principles act as a code of behavior on field for coaches and youth with the intention that they be transferred off the field and into their lives in the community.

#### *Coach training and codes of behavior*

Training programs for the volunteer coaches include 3-5 day programs that are run by the Australian Catholic University exercise science staff and students. The coaching program includes the following areas:

1. Personal leadership development
2. Group management skills
3. Skills and drills
4. Skill progressions and minor games
5. How to organize and run a training program
6. Teaching and demonstration skills
7. Personal presentation skills
8. Refereeing
9. Warm up drills
10. Tournament organization and implementation
11. Demonstrating and encouraging codes of behavior 'fun', 'fair' and 'respect'

*Sandra Allen-Craig*

We do not teach them how to play soccer; they are already exceptionally talented at soccer! Coaching sessions include discussions based on the importance of the coaches' role in ensuring the values of fair play and the importance of the children having fun. Coaches are given examples of different ways this could be demonstrated and achieved with their teams. The coaches are also asked to agree to a code of conduct. The code of conduct supports and encourages the principles of 'fun', 'fair', and 'respect'. The program's code of conduct requires that coaches agree to: help children *enjoy* the game, reward children for their *effort* to achieve, give everyone an *equal* chance to join in, and ensure the game is played fairly and by the rules.

Coaches are also recognized formally for their contribution to the program with certificates of participation and appreciation and are reimbursed for their travel costs. In response to community feedback, the coach-training program was conducted by FIFA in 2014, with an accredited FIFA coach running the five-day program. Future in Youth worked with the Timor-Leste Football Federation to successfully organize and implement this course, which in turn was a significant event for the community of Baucau.

#### PROGRAM EVALUATION

At the completion of each program, coaches and community members are asked to give feedback on the Future in Youth program through questionnaires and debrief sessions. In 2013 and 2014, a formal research project was conducted to try and determine whether the Future in Youth program was achieving its identified program goals and to gain a better understanding of the community's perception of the program in order to help guide and direct future programs.

Community leaders and coaches involved with the program shared their views regarding the program and its impacts. Data was

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gathered through interviews and focus groups at the completion of the three-week program and three months later. Overall, the findings from the collection of data from across the years demonstrated four key themes. Coaches expressed that as a result of their participation they: enriched their experience to become a better coach, increased their capacity to teach children how to play soccer, increased their leadership capacity, and increased their skills that can also be shared in the community. These themes can be seen in a number of comments coaches provided:

*“Through [soccer] games we would know one another better and be friends. Regardless of where one is from, [soccer] games unite us all”,* Future in Youth coach 5.

*“Children are the important seeds of Timor-Leste, even in [soccer]”,* Future in Youth coach 1.

*“I look forward to voluntarily applying what I have learned; I feel the need to share the experiences I have to others, for good”,* Future in Youth coach 6.

*“To play with joy, love and respect. We will use whatever we have learned to promote love, justice and respect”,* Future in Youth Coach 2.

*“I want to apply what I have learned to bring happiness to my community, to orient my community to a better future, that is what everyone in the community wants”,* Future in Youth coach 7.

*“I shall use these skills to create tranquility, peace and stability in the society”,* Future in Youth coach 4.

*Sandra Allen-Craig*

*“I want to apply what I have learned to bring happiness to my community”, Future in Youth coach 3.*

*“The experience of Future in Youth so far is that the training and development of our coaches is the cornerstone of the development of the people of their communities”, Future in Youth coach 8.*

#### FUTURE IN YOUTH: A MISSION TOWARD SOCIAL INCLUSION

A socially inclusive society may be defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity.<sup>2</sup> We hope that Future in Youth, through the education of our coaches and the contribution of our sports program, contributes to the continued growth of social inclusion for the community of Baucau.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. D. CAPPO, *Social inclusion initiative. Social inclusion, participation and empowerment. Address to Australian Council of Social Services National Congress, 28-29 November, 2002.*

**III. TESTIMONIES**  
**Sports changed my life**



## A miracle

CHRIS TIU\*

I have been playing basketball since the age of 7. Basketball is in my blood. Although I wear a lot of different hats, I have to say that my career as a professional athlete has always been my priority. To give you an idea about how important basketball is in the Philippines, it can be compared to how important soccer is in Europe & South America, how hockey is in Canada, or how rugby is in New Zealand. Filipinos are just crazy about basketball.

### A MIRACLE

I would say that my involvement in the sport continues to change my life and my perception of life for the better. Yet more importantly, basketball is a medium that brings me closer to God and strengthens my faith. It was through this sport that I experienced my first miracle, and thankfully it happened at a very early age.

When I was eleven years old, my school team won the championship in our league back home in the Philippines. As a result, we were invited to represent the Philippines in the Las Vegas Easter Classic where we would compete against Americans who were much bigger and definitely more athletic than us. Unfortunately, because of my lack of height and confidence, I was a “bench-warmer”. You know

\* Chris Tiu is a Filipino professional basketball player and actor. He played for the national team and served as the team captain of the Smart Gilas Pilipinas national team from 2008 to 2012.

what they say, “bench-warmers” sit on the bench long enough to keep it warm for the star players of the team. That was basically our role.

Surprisingly, the undersized underdogs from the Philippines were able to conquer the odds and we made it all the way to the championship match. On the day before the championship game, we were resting in our rooms in the hotel when a bunch of notorious boys from the older team barged inside our rooms. They were so excited to show us their new discovery: the Pay-Per-View box beside the TV. Once they activated a certain channel and could not contain their excitement. Since we were in Las Vegas, you could already guess what type of show it was. It was an X-rated film.

I remember my mom telling me that we shouldn’t watch indecent and immoral shows, so I hid under the blanket because I didn’t want to watch. However the older boys were very aggressive. They were tickling me and coercing me to watch. Soon, everyone else in the room was watching. So I left the room, went outside and prayed the rosary, which my mom gave me before I left, reminding me that the Holy Rosary will protect me.

The following day was the championship game. It would have been a huge deal if we won because no team from the Philippines had ever won in this international competition. I was the 10<sup>th</sup> man, and since only 5 players play on the court at any given time, this meant that I was usually one of the last players to enter the court and only if we were even called by the coach to play. However that day, things were not going our way. We were playing bad. To make matters worse, two of our best players got injured. One fouled out. Another star player couldn’t fly to the United States because of problems with his visa. We were close to giving up.

So during the second half of the game, our coach had no other choice but to call on me, his benchwarmer. Miraculously, we made an unbelievable comeback and in the end, we won the championship.

## *A miracle*

We made history and also made the headlines in the Philippines. Even more miraculously, I played the best game of my life. I played like I never did before –I was scoring, assisting, and making clutch baskets to secure the victory. Guess what, I was eventually named MVP –I went from a benchwarmer to an MVP all in one day. A “nobody” that God decided to make a “somebody”.

I truly believe that there was a force in me that was not my own doing, but God’s mighty hand. Maybe He was showing me that I had done something right or something that was pleasing to Him, which He in turn manifested through the game of basketball. However, to be clear, I don’t believe we are always necessarily rewarded for our good actions. That’s why I consider this experience all the more a miracle. Most of the time, we must persist in our prayers and deeds. Mother Teresa said, “The good you do today will often be forgotten, do good anyway.” If we remain faithful to Him, our reward may not be in this world, but in a better place.

In any case, that experience changed my life. I gained confidence like never before; it gave my coach confidence in me and it was the start of many more championships and MVP awards for me. Today, basketball is my life. It is also a platform for me to serve God.

Looking back, it is easier for us to see how my “good” behavior was connected with an MVP award. Yet at 11 years old and when all your peers are influencing you to “go with the flow”, it can be very tough to make the right decision. Sometimes you are not even certain if you made the right decision. After the tournament, my coach punished those who participated in the viewing session and uttered a few words to me, “you did the right thing”. That was enough for me to have a sigh of relief and it gave me the courage to do the right thing. That’s how important the role a coach is- especially in a young athlete’s the formative years.

SPORTS PROMOTE HUMAN VIRTUE AND BUILD CHARACTER

We often talk about how sports promote the development of human virtues, such as discipline, perseverance, sacrifice, modesty, excellence, teamwork, and so on. I am extremely grateful to have been mentored by very capable and reputable basketball coaches since the very beginning of my basketball journey. I once had a coach who was a discipline administrator in school, a teacher, a former NBA player, an Olympian coach and even a coach who had also served as a Congressman. What was important is that they were life coaches as well, whether they knew it or not. Their words, and more so, their actions on and off the court cling to us vividly and most certainly affect the way we make decisions.

Athletes face challenges on a daily basis, such as balancing academics, securing playing time, battling injuries, dealing with sports 'politics' and worse, being victims of structural injustices. I have to say that these challenges, if handled well, can build character and prepare us for the real world at an early age.

I played college basketball for a Jesuit-run university called Ateneo in Manila. Our rival school was de La Salle University, another elite school with a formidable basketball program. It was like Real Madrid playing Barcelona or North Carolina vs. Duke. People would camp overnight to secure tickets for the games. The coliseum can be packed with 20,000 people, one side wearing blue, and the other green, all in the midst of the sounds of cheering fans and loud drums.

When I was a sophomore point guard, we played a close game with my team coming from behind on a run. The lead of the opponent was only down to 5 points after being down by as much as 17 points. We finally had momentum. At one point, I made a nice steal. I was on a fast break all by myself and I could feel the excitement of our crowd. I had a wide-open layup ahead of me, and to my devastation, I missed.

## *A miracle*

For those who don't understand basketball, it was like missing a penalty kick in football, but without the goalkeeper. Anyway, that killed our momentum and we lost the game.

It also killed my spirit and my confidence. The next day, I could not bear to walk in school with my head up or make eye contact with anyone. I know I was being ridiculed and I was too embarrassed. Thank goodness Facebook and Twitter did not exist then.

That season, we were eventually eliminated by our archrivals. I was at my weakest point in my entire basketball journey. So I took a year off from basketball and went to France on an exchange program. When I came back, I prayed to God and I worked harder than ever. In the following years, I was appointed team captain. I made several clutch winning shots, made it to the Mythical Team, and to cap it all, we won the collegiate championship in my senior year against that same team. It was after that when so many doors opened for me!

That humiliating experience taught me to be strong both mentally and emotionally. Failure brought me to my lowest of lows. I felt that nothing could get worse. Meanwhile, my coaches were the ones that helped me get back on my feet. Fr. Nebres, the President of the University then, told me words I that I will never forget. He said, "If you can handle the worst possible scenario, then what else are you afraid of? You will be fine." It made me a more courageous player and also a more courageous person. It was indeed a character-building experience, not to mention, life-changing. I have basketball to thank for this.

## GOD'S DIVINE HAND

Athletes are exposed to so many moments of chance every single day in midst of many hours of training and competition, which may have a significant impact. One bad bounce of the ball could lead you to lose a championship. One bad call of the referee can change the

outcome of a game. One wrong move could fracture a bone or tear a ligament. One trade decision could end the career of a pro-athlete. There are just too many variables beyond our control. The exposure to these uncertainties on a daily basis builds a certain kind of individual which can also help him to cope in other areas of life.

In my basketball career, there were so many unexpected twists and turns that allowed me to get to where I am today. If it had not been for one moment or one small decision, I could have been in a totally different place right now. It is only in retrospect that we realize how everything was so well crafted and planned by the 'ultimate architect'. Truly, there are no accidents in God's plan.

Every shot, pass, steal, substitution, and defensive stop all have repercussions. The hundreds of decisions that an athlete has to make on and off the court define who they are as a person. I believe that this ability to make numerous decisions in an environment of uncertainty taught me how to trust and let go, which I realized can be seemingly difficult for a non-athlete. We have learned to be appreciative of every opportunity and blessing given to us. We have learned to submit ourselves to the wonderful hand of God. St. Ignatius very aptly said, "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you."

Sometimes when we think we have got things figured out, and all circumstances seem to be in our favor, we still fall short. In the same way, when it seems that all things are against us, and there is no chance of victory, we end up winning or reaching our goals. Some people say it is a stroke of luck. I prefer to think of it as a stroke of God – a mysterious force that nobody can explain nor understand. From my childhood miracle in Las Vegas, to my adversities in Ateneo, I am grateful that I get to witness and experience being puzzled yet amazed every single day by His brilliant stroke, through this game called basketball.

## Sports as understood by the father of a family

MASSIMO ACHINI\*

I am grateful to have the opportunity to share my own modest story, as a soccer coach for twenty years, which I believe can be a useful point for discussion. While I was an educator for professional youth teams, I also coached a number of boys and girls teams from youth groups which, from some points of view, aren't considered competitive.

As a "warm-up" before I get into the game, I would like to provide some of my thoughts on sports in general. It is true that every season brings an opportunity for the world to gather around an important game in which a very prestigious trophy will be awarded to the champion. Yet, we know very well that this is not the most important game; instead it is the game in which we are able to educate today's youth in the sense of life. Passing through this process is essential for the future of humanity: if we can educate young people for life, then I think we can look to the future with hope.

What role do sports play in the game of education? Certainly sports play a fundamental role, but it does not have to be sidelined and put on the bench, or only be "in play" for just a few minutes. In this regard I would like to recall the words of Pope Francis in June 2014 during his wonderful encounter with the Italian Center for Sports clubs (CSI): "Sports are a means for education. I find there are three paths for young people, for children and little ones. The path of education, the path of sports and the path of work, when there are jobs for young

\* Massimo Achini served as the President of CSI (Italian Sport Center) from 2008 to 2016 and is now the president of the Milano Regional Committee of CSI.

people to start with! If there are these three paths, I assure you there wouldn't be dependencies".<sup>1</sup>

One can then understand how the world of sports is called to excellence in order to "educate young people for life". Just as great champions need to take on more responsibility when the game becomes crucial, the decision makers of today's sports world must also take on more responsibilities. Those involved in sports must really give the best of themselves in order to offer a contribution to young people who play in the minor leagues, in small clubs, in all those environments in which we find the beautiful heart of humanity.

### *Relationships in the world of sports*

A number of delicate relationships exist in the world of sports, namely the relationship between parents and sports clubs, and between parents and coaches. It is both a curse and a blessing not only for the 13,500 sports clubs connected to the Italian Center for Sports, but indeed for all of the clubs in the world that have anything to do with the youth sector.

Usually in sports and specifically in sports clubs, we reason like this: how can we solve the problem of the parents? How can we curb the small or even big damage that parents sometimes cause while standing on the sidelines? It seems important to me, while remaining within the framework of seeing sports as a game of educating for life, that it is important to come to an understanding of how to work together with parents, so that they may become great resources. In fact, I

<sup>1</sup> Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Address to members of the sports associations for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the CSI (Italian Sports Center)*, 7 June 2014.

*Sports as understood by the father of a family*

am convinced that the sports world needs the positive contribution on behalf of all of its components in order to meet the wonderful and difficult challenge of educating children and young people for their lives.

It would be helpful to examine different types of parents to get an idea of where I am coming from. There are some parents who are a bit shortsighted, they cannot see us [coaches] or they live a double life because they burden the lives of their children with the dashed expectations of their own lives. They wanted to become champions; they did not succeed, and are now hoping to recover from this disappointment principally through the activities of their children. Ultimately, they drive the love of sports right out of those children. In Italy alone, the ISTAT statistics report that four out of ten young people will have abandoned sports by fourteen years old. It's a dramatic figure, and among the reasons given for the decision, at the top of the list is "stress caused by my parents': because my dad and my mom stressed me out so much that it was no longer fun."

So, these parents are a bit like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, because they come, especially mothers, early on in the season and they say to coaches, "I'm here because my son has to play, to have fun, please, I'm interested above all in the educational aspect, it would be so nice if they could all play...". Then, at the whistle of the referee, you find these same parents climbing the fence behind the goal, shouting for the full 90 minutes of the game, it seems they almost suffer from some personality disorder.

Then there are those parents that the great athlete Damiano Tommasi likes to call the "mother hen" parents. They are the ones who carry the bag for their children. You can recognize them when they arrive on the playing field: the car door opens, the child gets out and then the parent follows with the child's bag, and they carry it all the way to the locker room, and before they leave they check to see that

everything is truly ok. One knows very well that this is not how you learn to grow up in life.

Another type is the stressed-out parent. They are the ones who basically make the coach the number 2 man, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or even 5<sup>th</sup>. They are the ones who always know everything. When their child plays and scores everything is great and the coach is the most wonderful coach in the world, but if you dare leave the kid on the bench even once, you are the worst person on the earth. Then, after the game, on the way home in the car, the kid is forced for two hours to review the game with the parent. So the sport becomes stressful and not the beautiful experience it should be for those years.

I will close my exposition with that of the absent parent, which for a coach is the most fortunate type, because they are not there to bother them. John arrives on the field without his parents, you never see them, they are not there at practices and neither do they come for the games: how nice!

I will repeat here a phrase of a great basketball coach, Dan Peterson, even if I do not agree with it very much. To the question of what characteristics should a child have in order to become a champion in life, he used to answer that if he were an orphan, he would have the best chance. I disagree with that statement because the absence of parents needs to be seen as a signal, a warning sign that these kids have double the need of our attention, our affection, our love, and our passion for education, because very often at home, in their daily lives they feel this absence of their parents. Therefore, I believe that the responsibility of a coach should consist of taking on the concern for the full life of any child who has this experience.

I have some personal experience working with kids who have parents that are absent from many situation, since some years ago I was asked if I would be willing to coach a team of prisoners in San Vittore, a prison for minors in Milan. It was great experience, because when

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the opportunity to practice sports comes to those hard places, it can really bring out the best.

One can imagine the difficulties that may arise while playing sports in a hard environment, such as a jail for kids who have problems, or for immigrants who have come to Italy after leaving their families behind. However, in this case it was good that these kids had also practiced sports in their countries and played well enough to win the Italian Center for Sports Championship.

A few days before the end of the championship, the goalkeeper was released from prison and as a result the kids began to quarrel among themselves. Who would be the goalie? Who could not be the goalie? We intervened immediately, with some difficulty, we tried to remind them about the educational importance of this experience and urged them not to behave in this way.

Nonetheless, one day as we gathered in the small cement field where we trained and played, while reflecting about what was happening to us, the door of San Vittore opened. It was Hadid, the former goalkeeper, saying: "Boys, I'm back!" It is true, he was arrested again, but his it is clear that his first thoughts were for his team, which had a very strong bond. This situation stresses how even in harsh conditions, situations in which strong human bonds are often absent, sports can restore so much.

One final and beautiful note regarding parents comes from the experience of Emiliano Mondonico, a great coach with a great professional past, but especially great for the values that he is known to embody. Mondonico coached many great teams, and now coaches a team of children in the youth group in the Italian town of Lodi. With this team he does a wonderful thing: he requires the parents to take the field with their kids.

While he was coaching the children's team he constantly heard the parents in the stands saying, "do this, do that", and one day he had reached his limit and said, "Stop! Dear parents, next week you need to come with soccer shoes!" He made them take the field and essentially said: now it is up to you.

I reference this because along its wonderful powers, sports have a commanding force of immediacy that allows one to educate without words, and instead with immediate and concrete experiences. So in this situation where Mondonico made the parents experience the game for themselves, they were able to understand what was happening in the game and were able to build a more relaxed atmosphere.

My discussion has been a sort of short phenomenology of parents, and even if it has been brief, I ask myself what is really important today. I think it is very important that those involved in sports, especially the coaches, embrace the educational responsibilities that they have. I emphasize this while remembering the words of Pope Francis, who said that coaches or anyone "involved in the working with little ones ... are teachers in every respect".<sup>2</sup>

It is important that coaches, managers, and staff feel the joy of sports and know how to embrace the large responsibility of being true educators. They should not just be content with winning or losing a game or even performing the technical aspects well in a way that appeals to everyone. The real goal is much higher and it is much, much bigger.

In order to carry out this educational responsibility fully, we must also know that educators cannot and will not ever do much if they do this alone, even though they often serve as the most important reference points for youth. In fact, today, it is often the case that coaches

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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spend much more time with young kids than many catechists, teachers, and even the parents themselves, and thus have the opportunity to serve as remarkable reference points. Yet these formators, alone by themselves, will never succeed in offering the wonderful experience of education to children that will serve them for their entire lives. Therefore, an alliance with the family, especially with parents, is important.

While it is often a difficult task to accomplish in the sports world, it should still be seen as a precious and fundamental partnership in which everyone's roles are respected; the parent is the parent and the coach is the coach. Highlighting the significance of this relationship can help overcome the common temptation to ignore one another and help sports clubs serve as real educating communities.

I conclude with the awareness that sports are not enough in themselves. Sports can do a lot to educate but is simply not enough. Only a sport open to the infinite and open to the absolute can help someone play the game of life. It has been said that while we always strive to teach our children about every aspect of their lives, they can teach us about what really matters in life. This concept can often be seen in sports, as it would be enough to watch kids play and watch them learn about the beauty of practicing sports.



## Being a better person through soccer

IVÁN RAMIRO CÓRDOBA\*

Thanks be to God, to my talent, to my work, to my sacrifice and dedication, I have been able to have many things in life. God has given me a lot and this makes me feel obligated to give back what I have received. Along with my wife Maria Isabel, I have created the “Colombia te quiere Ver” Foundation through which we provide education, food assistance, and mental health services to 150 children. Providing opportunities and essential items such as food to the most valuable groups of people who have the least, including children and elderly, mothers who are prostitutes, or those who are sick, is very gratifying.

I cannot forget those who need help, and that is why I also instill this in my children. I hope that, beyond the prosperity they have experienced in their lives, they may never forget about others. Even though they were born in and have lived in Italy, I feel as if they should know what life is like in Colombia where they come from, where their parents and their grandparents come from, and how we have spent years and years seeking peace. Colombia has almost 50 million inhabitants and more than 90% of us are good, joyful, and ambitious people who have the drive to get ahead and seek solutions where there are difficulties.

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*Iván Ramiro Córdoba*

Even though my children have not been in grave need or suffered hunger, they should not forget that there are people who need us. That is why giving back a large part of what we have received, everything that God has given us and blessed us with, is so important to us. I think that it is gratifying and uplifting to be able to help those people who do not expect anyone to lend them a hand. The smile of satisfaction on the face of a child or an elderly person when they receive unexpected help is priceless. This makes me happy.

ON POPE FRANCIS AND GOD

Thanks to my parents and my wife, I am, and always have been, a believer. When I look at my children I see God, and for this reason God is always at the center of my life. Now I can reveal something that I have kept to myself for many years.

During the American Cup in 2001, I made a promise to God that if He would allow us to be champions, if we could give this enormous gift to Colombia, if He would do this miracle for me, I would donate all of the prizes I would receive. Well, the miracle happened and I fulfilled my promise and donated everything to charity. Everything happened in that moment, but it could not have been a coincidence because I do not believe in coincidences. God and life reveal to us a path that is sketched out, and that is the path I have decided to undertake. This life decision entails all sorts of commitments, which I take on, and that is why God is always a light for me.

THE INVITATION TO POPE FRANCIS

At the end of the '90s, I played as center defense for Argentina's San Lorenzo de Almagro. During this time Pope Francis was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and a card-carrying supporter of the team.

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Providence allowed for a match for peace to be organized at the beginning of this year, and I was able to be with my whole family at an audience with the Holy Father. That day I promised that I would give him the team jersey, and the opportunity finally presented itself in March 2015, when I had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis. That day I gave him the number “two” jersey of San Lorenzo de Almagro, where I wrote the name of my foundation along with the message “Colombia wants to see you.”

Along with the jersey I gave him an invitation to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the foundation on May 18<sup>th</sup>. The wonderful thing is that, eight days later, through a letter sent from Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin to the President of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, Archbishop Augusto Castro, it was confirmed that the Pontiff would visit Colombia. I was precisely the last one who had invited him. This is not to say that thanks to me he agreed to go to Colombia, but you never know how much influence this may have had in encouraging him to visit. We hope that this will take place soon, because we are in need of his presence.

I am sure that for Colombia, beyond the issue of believers or non-believers, having such a special person as Pope Francis among us will be a great blessing. I am always surprised by the candidness of Pope Francis; it seems to me that he knows how to communicate very well, in a very natural and earthly way, with great depth but very simple language. He is able to make us feel that God or the dogma of religion are not something far away, nor something that is very difficult to reach or understand. The Pope wants to, and does, make us understand that God is among us, in our neighbor, in every moment that we live, respecting beliefs while making it clear that we all have a spiritual aspect and that this must be directed toward the good, that we should be honest and do things in good faith. This is why I can

*Iván Ramiro Córdoba*

repeat without the fear of being mistaken: “Holy Father, Colombia wants to see you.”

#### ATHLETIC DIPLOMACY THROUGH SOCCER

##### *Joys and hope: Generating an environment of reconciliation*

When I left Colombia, I established a goal for myself. I had to mark a new and different history for Colombian soccer players, to become a role model myself, to open doors and show that we are prepared for great challenges, and that we can take on great responsibilities and be a model to follow. My goal was to demonstrate, through words and actions, that soccer is not just all about goals and talent, but rather being a well-rounded person. This made difficulties appear much smaller and problems more manageable.

I transmit this to each one of the players who arrive in Europe; I seek them out and I tell them to get their documents in order for their own sake and for their families. I also tell them to that they should always be careful about the company they keep, for they represent a face of a country and a community.

##### *Colombia: Champion of the 2001 American Cup*

Every situation in a match is important, and this proved to be true in the American Cup. During moments of conflict in which people were suffering, everything was still poured into the Cup. At one point, we were third and we were not willing to give in. That season, as soon as we finished competing with our respective teams, “Prof.” Maturana gathered us together. Even though we only met for a month and a half, it made no difference to us because from that first day of the meeting, we all became excited.

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Even though there were rumors that the Cup might be canceled and Argentina had announced that they were not going to participate, we were not willing to give up. We kept focus on what we wanted because we knew we had a great role to play. Undoubtedly, the positive energy of the entire country was influential. Seldom in history had there been such communion before a championship.

I was a leading defender in the Cup, and even though I found myself shadowed by a forward who was taller than me, thinking about my country gave me strength. It made me jump in such a way that my header took the ball into the goal and slipped in the net while millions of Colombians were awakened with hope and joy. It was a dream come true for everyone, and the best thing was to experience a happy country turning into a true national team that was able to bridge across differences. The team could not let these dreams and responsibilities unfulfilled, and this ultimately gave us enough strength to win the American Cup.

*On Andrés Escobar*

For me, Andrés Escobar has a special, profound meaning. Growing up, he was my idol. I often watched him play at Rio Negro and had a lot of fun. My friends and I were also ball boys when the Nacional played friendly matches. After the match, the children who were responsible for collecting balls were given the opportunity to hand the trophy to the captain. I have a photo of the time when I was chosen to give the trophy to the captain, who was, precisely, Andrés Escobar. In this moment I felt as if destiny had chosen me. Yet of course, it is the individual who has to take a step forward on their given paths and must work hard to continue along the way.

Many years went by and tragedy came when Andrés was assassinated. This tragedy will never be fully justified or explained, for he

was one of the most loved people in the history of Colombian soccer. He was an outstanding athlete both on and off the field. His death provokes a pain that does not go away easily.

Years later, I always played with the number 'two' when I played for the Nacional after my idol Andrés. He always played with that number because he identified it 'par excellence' as center defense, and that was the number that whoever played this position should wear. Yet I knew that in this case it would be impossible; even though I had fulfilled my dream of playing on the Nacional, having Andrés Escobar's number was almost impossible, because it was decided that the team would retire his jersey as a tribute to him.

Later on, I fulfilled another dream of mine when I had the opportunity to play for the Colombian Team, which was managed by Hernán "el Bolillo" Gómez at the time. After giving my best effort in the first matches, the coach called me aside one day and told me, "Iván, you are the person who is going to take the jersey of Andrés Escobar out of the trunk where it has been kept for three years". I froze, unable to say anything. It was a great honor, but also a situation that deserved all of my respect. I did not know if I would have the athletic stature to shoulder this great responsibility. Now I realize that this doubt that I felt in that moment was an essential asset to help me make that decision, since it regarded the soccer player who had taught me so much and who without a doubt served as a model player and person to emulate. This honor also served as a great motivation and increased my enthusiasm. With this in mind, I went to the equipment manager and watched him open the trunk and pull out the jersey from the bottom and I put it on.

When we finished training and I returned to the Nacional, "el Bolillo" told me, "From now on, you will use number 'two' on the team." I couldn't wait to return to the Nacional, to take out this jersey and wear it with the honor it deserved and the responsibility that it

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signified. From that moment on, I became even more convinced that it was my mission to be a positive example as a player and as a person. For me the jersey is, and always will be, a model of someone who lives in me, in us, and who is and always will be present as a model player. I just want to underline that this experience will not end the day that I stop playing soccer, and will certainly continue throughout my life and the rest of my career.



## How I found my vocation through sport

ALISON WANNER\*

**M**y parents and catechism classes taught me that the meaning of life is to know, love, and serve God. I saw God as a heavenly Father as I participated in my First Holy Communion. I went to the public school several blocks away from my house and often spent a lot of time helping my mother keep up with household duties any way I could, as I was the fourth of nine children.

I wanted to be good and do things right because I saw how important it was within a family for things to go smoothly. When I was younger, I was very introverted and never had much of an opinion. I respectfully attended Catechism class and never questioned the teachings of the Church.

Throughout high school, I added more and more to my schedule as well as my résumé. As a freshman, I was already playing several sports at the varsity level and played goalkeeper for the school's soccer team. Thus, my days were filled with extracurricular activities back to back. I trained myself to put much emphasis on being a hard worker and thought that showing emotion was a sign of weakness.

During those high school years, I lost my identity as a daughter of God. Though I went to Mass I thought being a good Catholic meant just being a good person with not more depth than that. I also learned

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how to please others as I developed my social skills and gained independence through various part-time jobs I had around town. By my senior year of high school, I was a hard worker who was successful in academics, soccer, and was being recruited to play at several universities.

At the start of my freshman year at Minnesota State University-Moorhead, my soccer team quickly became my family away from home. During the first campout bonding, trip we played games around the fire and I found it eye-opening to hear what lustful activities each of my teammates often pursued in a search of love. In these settings, I played everything down to try and fit in as best as I possibly could.

By halfway through the season, I earned the starter goalkeeper spot, surpassing the other freshmen and junior goalkeepers who had better training to start with. I also observed the life of the team and cared for my teammates after their nights partying in an effort to seek friendship and belonging.

One year, my team went to Buenos Aires, Argentina for a spring break trip. It only took a few games against other teams and touring a few stadiums to help me understand how soccer is idealized at the center. During that trip, I roomed with two teammates that were dating each other at the time. Along with my team, I felt free to go out on the town where we were treated like VIPs at the club we went to. I wanted to be loved and the club and dancing was freeing. As a surprise to my teammates, I was one of the last girls to get back to our hotel that night.

During my junior year of college, I had a cousin that gave a Varsity Catholic Missionary my phone number. The missionary then called me to invite me to attend her athlete Bible study. Yet that semester I was already enrolled in 18 credits, had two part-time jobs, and had soccer practice daily; all of which lead me to stay up until 2am to finish

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homework. Since I didn't want to full-out say 'no,' I thought I would go once and never go back.

Later that semester, I also invited a teammate who was a borderline alcoholic and a friend who played hockey at a neighboring college to the Bible study. One time I snuck out of the hotel on one of our weekend away trips at 6am and walked two miles to attend Sunday morning Mass. On my way home, I found a \$20 bill in an empty parking lot, yet I found myself more excited to share with my teammates that I had found the money rather than where I really went that morning. It was a process.

The missionary study leader promoted the 2010 Made for More FOCUS national conference in Orlando, Florida, and invited me personally on several occasions. I registered mostly to get her off my case, but ultimately that conference had a very deep impact on me. I was inspired by the talks given by genuine dynamic Catholics that had witnessed their relationship with Christ as if He were their best friend. It was during that weeklong experience that I realized I needed to deepen my relationship with the person of Jesus through prayer, confession, and Mass.

After making a few new faith resolutions, I flew to England to start my spring semester studying abroad at the University of Lincoln in central England. In the small city, I was one of three young Catholic students that I was aware of. I was able to find a Catholic church about a 20-minute walk away from my apartment, which also had Eucharistic Adoration on Fridays. A group of elderly worshipers who liked my accent invited me to lead the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3pm.

Through this, I quickly learned about and was absorbed in that devotion, having a greater awareness of the Lord's mercy and love that I needed and to open my heart to receive it more. Every week sitting there I would ask Jesus to reveal Himself to me in the Eucharist. Every Sunday I took notes during the homily at Mass, I went to confession

once a month and saw how I was starting to break away from the culture I was so desensitized to back at home.

While I was transitioning to life in England I played for their women's soccer team, as they needed a goalkeeper. So with that I found an even more liberal and 'if it feels good do it' culture as the team clubbed on Wednesdays and the weekends. More women on the team were openly same-sex attracted and the campus explicitly promoted propaganda to not be homophobic.

Throughout my time abroad I fell into the merciful and loving arms of the Lord countless times just as a toddler learns to walk. I slowly started to form my identity in the Lord and let go of the social scene I wanted to cling to with a few different crowds of my peers in England.

My senior year back in America I found that those friends I had clung to previously were not as mature and exciting as I once thought they once were. At that time another missionary shared with me something I'll never forget. He said, "The end of the world could happen tomorrow, and I don't want to be standing in front of the gates of heaven waiting to get in and my best friends in front of me turn around and say, "Why didn't you tell me about heaven? Now it's too late for me to get in."

I realized for the first time that if I truly loved my friends I should have conversations with them, but I didn't know how to go about that at all. I turned to FOCUS, thinking they could teach me. Ultimately one month after I interviewed with them, I was offered a position as a missionary. When I said 'yes,' a huge wave of peace came over me. Even though I didn't fully understand what being a missionary meant, I knew that God was calling me towards it and I was filled with a consolation and happiness that remained in me for months.

Eventually I was sent to serve at a rival campus in Minnesota, where I jumped into the mission of inviting college students into a

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growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, inspiring and equipping them for a lifetime of Christ-centered evangelization, discipleship, and friendship in which they lead others to do the same. God continues to bless Varsity Catholic with many conversion stories of students.

Erika was a Division I hockey player that was raised in a luke-warm family. She grew up in the hockey culture and had been in a serious relationship that was immoral. After investing time in building up a friendship with her, she started confiding in me and slowly saw the beauty of finding her identity as a daughter of God. I was her outlet for choosing goodness. We grew in our relationships with the Lord together as she invested in her interior life of prayer and the sacraments. I would drive Erika to daily Mass, invite her to come to Bible study, pray in adoration, and go on retreats with me. Eventually she opened her heart to the idea of going on mission since she saw the need and had a heart for the dark world she had experienced within athletics. Last year she answered the Lord's call to become a missionary and is currently serving and reaching out to other athletes.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my story and I am excited to announce that I will be entering Religious Life with the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus, a diocesan community in Southern Minnesota in this year of Consecrated life. Through my time with Varsity Catholic, the formation, support, and opportunities opened the door to serving the Lord every day and discerning my vocation and being open to hear the invitation of Jesus Christ in the silence of my heart to devote my whole life to Him. Thank you and God bless.



## A real commitment, a desire of action

JOSEF CLEMENS\*

As one can imagine, it is not easy to provide a summary or conclusion stemming from the content of our speakers and their contributions to the seminar. Therefore, I would like to present some guidelines for reflection in order to put our commitments into practice in our lives and in our workplaces.

First, I would like to thank those who were able to contextualize the image of the coach in the perspective of lay apostolate, because this is the first task of our Pontifical Council for the Laity: promoting the apostolic commitment of lay people in all areas of their lives. The role of the coach— as we have all understood— is central in the life of athletics, both in recreational and professional sports.

What does a seminar like this want to accomplish? The first thing is that it aims to help deepen the reflection on a specific question, and I am convinced that the choice to examine questions surrounding the role of a coach proved to be a valuable choice. It is very useful in the context of our work in our Church and Sport section.

Due to the current social context (family, work, leisure), the coach has for the younger generations, an incisive and at times unique relevancy. Today we talk about the loss of the father, the absence of the family, and of abandoned young people. Consequentially, people such as school teachers and of course the coaches, acquire a role that is “supplementary” and very important to the human formation of youth. The same can be said of priests, catechists, and the ones responsible

<sup>2</sup> Bishop, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

for youth groups in relation to the church. All of these categories of people can fill a “void” in education and become “leading figures” that contribute to orienting the lives of younger generations.

For this reason, I would recommend reading and pondering deeply on the message that Pope Francis addressed to our seminar<sup>1</sup>. I must admit that this papal document has impressed me a lot. One of the first things the Dicastery did was to translate it as soon as possible into English, a language that, in the area of reflection on questions concerning issues related to sport, has acquired a primary importance. So I would like to suggest that you study the message Pope Francis addressed to us word for word. It really is worth while!

The Pope’s message is centered on athletic activities for young children and adolescents. The main issue of our seminar on the educational dimension of sport quickly emerges. In the document, Pope Francis mentions the *good* educator twice. Therefore, the question arises: who is not a good educator? If there are *good* educators, there must be those that are not so good or those that are bad. The Pope himself offers us the answer by telling us that the impact of an educator, especially for young people, depends more on what he is as a person and how he lives, than on what he says. I am convinced that in these words of Pope Francis, there can be found the important contributions of us all (I would say of the whole church), for the world of sport; which is to clarify to our coaches that their “being” is the necessary educational contribution in their activities. They are to be examples of integrity, consistency, righteous judgment, impartiality, and at the same time, they must be joyful men who are happy to do their jobs, and who have the joy of living!

<sup>1</sup> POPE FRANCIS, *Message to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko, on occasion of the international seminar “Coaches: Educating People”*, 14 May 2015.

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The Pope also highlights the duty of patience. We know that many people today no longer have patience; everything must be done right, and everything must be done immediately. The real educator must in this sense be “counter-current”: for without patience and perseverance, you can never reach the “peak.” The good coach must have the capacity to convey a sense of esteem and benevolence to the boys or girls, especially to those who are at a bigger disadvantage.

The Pope then reaches, as it were, the height of his reflections and repeats, almost like a cry: “And it is important that it be an example of faith!” Faith, in fact, always helps us to look up to God in order not to absolutize any of our activities, including that of sport. Faith helps us to have the right detachment and wisdom to evaluate in a proper manner, the value of sport within the area of failures and triumphs - but not only!

In my sermon earlier in the seminar, I tried to say the same thing using a different image, one of the “open sky.” The believing coach exercises his profession knowing that he is not limited to himself. He is aware that above him there is an “open sky,” that God leads him and accompanies him in all of his activities. He is conscious that God is “above” him, his work and his efforts, and that God is present in his meetings and dialogues.

In the Pope’s message, we find a beautiful phrase: “Faith gives us that gaze of goodness on others, allowing us to overcome the temptation of rivalry and aggressiveness, making us understand the dignity of every person, even of those least equipped and disadvantaged.”

During my studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University, one of the most discussed issues was the question of *christianum proprium*, that is: what role does faith play in contrast with good action in a good non-believing man? What does faith “add” to the action of a Christian in a “material” or “intentional” sense? The Pope’s answer is that faith gives us *a gaze of goodness*. We can also call it (as it has been

said multiple times during the seminar) the attitude of positivity, as well as the discovery of the positive attributes that are hidden in the other. In other words this means: that it is nice that we are doing athletic activity together, and it is great that we meet and try to attain a certain goal! This joint effort satisfies me and fills me with a deep joy! This “positive” attitude is particularly true for a coach, who is happy to be able to give something of himself to others, and who is convinced that by giving himself he is fulfilling the deepest meaning of his life, inherent in the sport activity that he has freely chosen.

And then comes the consequences in many areas, such as solidarity and the inclusion of people who need us, who do not possess the same physical or intellectual capacities, or who possess them in ways different from our own. All these people are included in my activity, because in my work I serve others and I would like to reach out to everyone.

One of the key words of the Christian life and consequently for each activity, is the word *diaconia*. For many years I have met with groups of young Germans who are distinguished by great self-esteem and a strong sense of criticism. Often they comment on how the Church only has a thousand rules and prohibitions to offer: you must do this and you cannot do that! In their view it seems like the Church wants to steal the joy out of living, placing before us so many rules and so many barriers.

My answer consists in a simple commentary: the teaching of the Church wants nothing more than to give us, and to guide us towards the gaze of Jesus Christ, towards others and towards the “things” that surround us. In other words: in the face of decisions –small and large– let us ask what Jesus would do in this moment, or in this situation, what would He choose. In this manner so many problems are resolved, and there is no longer the need for so many laws, because this is the one and only supreme law. It seems to me that the conclusion and

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ultimate purpose of these discussions is to motivate us to look at sport through the eyes of Jesus, watching the others with His eyes, either as a coach, professor, teacher or as a youth and adolescent.

Another aspect to consider – and it is another result of the seminar – is the task of encouraging others. It is nice to see and meet people who share in the way we think, and who transmit a central aspect of Pope Francis’s magisterium, that is, sharing. We share our experiences in the world of sport, as was done in this seminar. We have been able to determine that we share a lot in common, knowing that we work for a good cause, and we give a really useful contribution to the mission of the Church, a contribution for the good of every man and not only of sports.

The seminar has allowed us to share dialogue and exchange experiences. But the seminar does not stop here, it is simply a shove and it is only the first step. What must follow is the deepening of our reflection on the various professions and areas of responsibility. We can, for example, organize similar seminars at various levels. We can form working groups in order to continue the reflection started here in Rome, using the Pope’s message as a compass, which contains many aspects that still need to be examined.

This commitment is particularly true for the Catholic sports organization: “It is appropriate... that your seminar calls all organizations working in the field of sports, international federations and national, and secular and ecclesial sports associations, to pay due attention and to invest the necessary resources for the professional, human and spiritual formation of coaches”.<sup>2</sup> This is the strong push, the encouragement that we have to take home.

When we present the work of our Pontifical Council for the Laity, for example in the visits “*ad limina Apostolorum*” of the bishops from

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

around the world, listing the various sections and also the Church and Sport sections, the bishops ask themselves: what do you want to attain with this section? Establish a soccer or tennis team at the Vatican? And we respond: that is not our intention! Instead, we want to offer to all the people who are engaged in sport, inside and outside the Church, a ministry of service, transmitting the deep and rich Christian vision of man. Christian anthropology is a treasure in itself and contains content and important orientation, even for a person who is far from the Church and the Christian faith.

Sharing, encouragement and integral vision of man: these are the three great motivators, the three major conclusions of this seminar, in addition to including disadvantaged people. This is another point of encouragement and motivation: include and involve them! It was also said at the seminar, that not everyone has, so to speak, the same “wallet” and there are those who do not have a wallet. Let us not forget those without a wallet, and let us try to include them as well in our sport activities.

I would not like to repeat the list of difficulties and pressures existing in the sport world. We are all familiar with these dangers and temptations. It would be good if this seminar helped to strengthen us inwardly, so that we may be more resistant in this area and may be able to transmit this resistance to others, in order that they may not fall into an economic, nationalist or other type of trap. Man is too precious, and athletic activity is too precious to fall into these traps, traps that have nothing to do with authentic and true sport.

One last point: it is asked of all us, coaches and all those involved in the world of sport, to be authentic witnesses of the faith, living out a life that is truly Christian. The whole of the Pope’s letter revolves around this central aspect: the coach as a lay witness to the faith in sport. This is our common vocation, even priests and religious, must all be authentic witnesses to our faith! We know that words are not

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enough, maybe too much has already been said. Now, it takes real commitment; we desire action. I am convinced that the entire pontificate of Pope Francis can be summed up like this: now let us start acting, let us do what we profess, each in his own area of expertise, be it in the world of sport or in other areas. Let us begin Christian action! Let us translate our faith into life, in an authentic life, in a joyful life, a life that intrigues and touches others, so that others may ask us: why are you doing this, why do you live in that manner? This concrete commitment, right in the current environment, is worth more than a thousand books, and more than a great library!



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