Rethinking the role of the coach through a historical sketch:
between educator, mentor and technical expert

Replanteándose el rolo del entrenador a través de un bosquejo histórico:
entre educador, mentor y experto técnico

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> *The Church clearly recognizes the inherent value of sport, but at the same time, expresses concern for the true authenticity of sport. The Church is attentive to the possible deviations that contradict sport's true purpose, and, worse still, that harm the integrity of the person. Because of this, sport is also placed within the realm of human activities that are in need of salvation.*[2]

In Monsignor Mazza's address to the Pontifical Council of the Laity's first seminar on sport in 2005, he professed how sport was in need of 'redemption'. The bishop, and longtime chaplain to the Italian Olympic team, outlined how sport itself was an ascetic path to virtue, one that requires an active apprenticeship in skill. But who is responsible for maintaining what Mazza refers to as the 'authenticity of sport', its 'true purpose' and for safeguarding the 'integrity of the person'? Any apprenticeship is completed under the supervision of a tutor and sport is, of course, no different. Indeed, a learning environment rarely exists without a teacher responsible for imparting knowledge or skills. Sport, specifically football as will be discussed hereafter, has long been a place for learning and coaches have assumed these teaching roles. This paper will discuss the coach and the varying historical contexts that have influenced the nature of this role as an educator, mentor and technical expert.

It is argued here that the wider nature of sport at a given time has influenced the role of the coach. Whether football operated with amateur ideals or towards professional ends, the ultimate orientation of sport has had an undeniable impact on the coach as the person responsible for youth. Furthermore, the place where football was taught or practiced has also conditioned the role of the

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[2] Carlo Mazza, 'Sport as viewed from the Church's Magisterium', *The World of Sport Today: A field of Christian Mission – International Seminar, Vatican 11-12 November 2005*, (The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), p. 66.

coach. If football was an extension of physical education at school, the coach's role was defined in part by the broader educational imperatives of the scholastic environment. The coach was first and foremost an educator within an educational system. However, if the coach was part of a club system where the first team was fully professional, the role was certainly different. Here, the coach's role focused on training future pros. In short, the more professionalized the context, the more the coach became a technical expert rather than all-round educator. A clear understanding of these issues is fundamental for any sporting organization, the Catholic Church being no exception, to elaborate its definition of the coach. It is not altogether surprising then, that, after two seminars on the role of the sport chaplain and Catholic sport associations, the Pontifical Council for the Laity has turned its attention for this conference to another key figure in sport: the coach.[3]

This paper is divided into several sections. The first is a brief review of the question of amateurism and professionalism in football. I follow this with a historical sketch of the different places where football was played and how this impacted directly on the type of coaching roles. The conclusion draws on some of the issues of coaching in the context of this conference and specifically the connections to the pastoral and faith implications.

Amateurism and professionalism – setting the scene for coaches

The key debate throughout much of the first half of the twentieth century in football administration was about whether to allow players to play professionally, and if yes, how to define such a practice.[4] Football had its origins in nineteenth century Britain and was intimately tied to 'muscular Christianity'.[5] The movement embraced the pursuit of sport with its role in forming character, inculcating discipline and leadership among the boys in Britain's public schools. As the game extended beyond the upper classes and the world of the public schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the working classes adopted the sport wholeheartedly with the increases in leisure time and income. Entrepreneurs saw the opportunities around the sport as spectacle and built enclosed grounds that generated revenues. While the game's leadership in England officially accepted professionalism in 1885, elsewhere the process took decades longer and paying players was not allowed until well into the twentieth century.

[3] Aside from some mentions to the educational aspects of sport and the trainers, the two previous conferences did not address the role of the coach in any significant way. See *Sport: An educational and pastoral challenge – Seminar of study on the theme of sport chaplains, Vatican 7-8 September 2007*, (The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008) and *Sport, Education, Faith: Towards a new season for Catholic sports associations – International Seminar, Vatican 6-7 November 2009*, (The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011).
[4] See Pierre Lanfranchi and Alfred Wahl, *Les Footballeurs Professionnels*, (Paris: Hachette, 1995), pp. 33-53.
[5] See Tony Mason, *Association football and English society: 1863-1915*, (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 11-5.

The rift between those who promoted strict amateurism and those who accepted professionalism was felt not only within the sport of football but across the wider sporting movement. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), a bastion of the amateur ideal until 1984, fought openly with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in the 1920s regarding the question of professionalism until 1927 when a limited form of payment was allowed to footballers at the Olympic Games.[6]

Was there a link between the acceptance of professionally paid players and the creation of the role of a specialized and dedicated coach? Clearly, as the sport professionalized, the entourage around it also followed suit, whether that be coaching, administrative or even medical. However, the professionalization was perhaps not the defining element on the role of the coach. As Laurent Grün has argued, the 'late' acceptance of professionalism in France in 1932 was not the only factor in the slow development of the coaching profession which was also affected by player mentalities and recruitment policies.[7] As I will argue here, the professional reality was one important aspect but the places where football was played and organized also had a significant effect.

Different playing spaces, different coaching realities – the school, the club, the church

In the modern era there have been three principal places where football, at least in organized terms, has been taught and learned: the school, the club and the church. Each of these has presented different realities that have conditioned the coach's role in various ways. This section draws on examples from different countries and time periods. Schools provide some examples of the role of the coach-educator who worked principally within an educational environment largely separate from professional sport. The role of the coach in the club is more complex and often reflects the state of the sport professionally. The coach of the church-related football team ranged from the cassocked but football kicking priest to the layman, and mirrors to some extent the place of religion in society. Ultimately, the environment in which the game was organized reveals a great deal about who the coach was, and what were his objectives or mission. The lessons of history can be useful in then defining the role of the coach today and for the future.

Beginning with the scholastic environment, Kerrigan's research into football in the London schools around the turn of the twentieth century highlights the preponderant role held by teachers for schools' football teams.[8] He recounts how teachers oversaw practices and weekend matches in what became a regular feature of elementary school life. Most of the teachers had played in their youth and

[6] Paul Dietschy, *Histoire du football*, (Paris: Perrin, 2014), pp. 190-6.
[7] Laurent Grün, 'La difficile émergence de la profession d'entraîneur de football en France (1890-1950)', in *STAPS*, 63 (2003), pp. 45-62.
[8] Colm Kerrigan, *Teachers and Football Schoolboy association football in England, 1885–1915*, (Oxon: RoutledgeFalmer, 2005).

were active in promoting sporting activity of various kinds in the context of their schools. Their principal motivation, as advanced by Kerrigan, was to provide 'healthy outdoor exercise for children, gain prestige for the school, the boys and on occasions the teachers themselves' as well as 'offer opportunities for competitive games in an atmosphere of fairness'.[9] Any connection that improved the professional level was unintentional. The coach was first a school teacher and in second place a coach.

The educator role espoused by the coach in the school environment was personified in Alfredda E. Iglehart and her twenty-three year legacy as an athletic director and sports coach in Baltimore, Maryland in the United States. A trained sporting educator, she held a director role in physical education at School No. 76 (Francis Scott Key School) from 1920 to 1943.[10] The first woman to be inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame in 1951, she taught 'soccer fundamentals to more than 1,200 boys' as part of the physical education programme.[11] Under her mentorship, school teams competed regularly in the 1920s and 30s in a variety of age categories and won city titles on an almost annual basis. In comparison with the teachers in London whose school football matches occasionally took place at professional clubs, her involvement as a coach was entirely within the scholastic environment and separate from any, even unintended, professional sporting imperatives.

In the world of club football, the coach's role has followed the evolution of the sport itself. Where football was strictly controlled by an official government delegated federation, the role of the coach was regulated and defined by sporting authorities. The creation of a recognized scheme for training the next generation of professional players was only possible with well-prepared coaches capable of imparting all the technical, physical and tactical skill necessary for a career as an athlete. In contrast, a lack of such a professional regime left the coaching roles to well-meaning volunteer parents.

The first federation sponsored coaching course in France took place in 1946. Interestingly, the initial purpose of creating these courses was not only to create a teaching corps responsible for improving technical and tactical skills, but also to help professional players find work after their careers.[12] Clubs in France had begun football schools, or *écoles de football*, as early as 1935 but the phenomenon took off in the 1950s.[13] In these schools, the coaches were responsible for overseeing the 'physical preparation for football, technical and tactical instruction, social and moral education of the player' as stipulated in the French football federation's 1955 definition of the role of the officially

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[10] 'Miss Iglehart dies at age 67', *The Baltimore Sun*, 3 January 1960.
[11] 'Soccer party honors woman', *The Baltimore Sun*, 14 November 1952.
[12] Grün, 'La difficile émergence', p. 55.
[13] Kevin Tallec Marston, 'An international comparative history of youth football in France and the United States (c.1920-c.2000): the age paradigm and the demarcation of the youth game as a separate sector of the sport', (unpublished PhD thesis, De Montfort University, 2012), p. 168.

trained *entraîneur*.[14] The inclusion of the social and moral educational aims was to be consistent with their role as educators in the service of the public. As the number of youth registered in clubs mushroomed, the French federation also reported a gradually increasing number of officially licensed coaches who were educating players across the fields of France. From some five-hundred active licensed coaches in 1965, the number of officially trained 'football educators' (many in a volunteer capacity), had proliferated to around 9,000 by the turn of the 1980s.[15]

The particular nature of French sport comes from a specific vision of the State, society and public service in France where the delegatory sporting federations become trustees of a 'mission of public service' and are held to a certain number of obligations.[16] This marriage of government and private association, youth, sport and education as a mission for the public good, forms the subtext of the specific French institutional vision of sport. It is in this way that club coaches in France are required to uphold social and moral educational aims all in the context of being sporting and technical experts.

The French case of meticulously trained coaches stands in contrast to the anti-intellectual tradition of English professional club football. If the school game in England was overseen by teachers, the club game was 'managed' more than it was 'coached'. Carter's history of football management in England traces the development of the role of the manager and notes how qualified coaches were 'regularly stigmatized as 'schoolteachers''.[17] The lack of an educational approach to coaching was closely tied to how youth trained for professional football: apprenticeship. Young players who signed as apprentices received little coaching and were expected to complete menial tasks and exercise subservience to senior players.[18] The approach within the professional club game was traditionally miles away from being truly educative and it has only been in the last twenty years that football clubs have begun to embrace the philosophy of a trained coach rather than a more military-style motivator and man-manager.

A third picture of the coach in club football is that of the volunteer parent. Youth football in America in the 1970s and 80s underwent an enormous demographic boom. The number of registered youth players increased more than ten times between 1974 and 1985.[19] This new sporting world was

[14] Fédération Française de Football, *Annuaire 1955-56*, p. 79.
[15] Fédération Française de Football, *Annuaire 1965-66*, p. 6, and Fédération Française de Football, *Annuaire Officiel 1979-80*, p. 6.
[16] Jean-Michel Faure and Charles Suaud, *Le Football Professionnel à la Française*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), pp. 39-40.
[17] Neil Carter, *The Football Manager*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 128.
[18] Andrew Parker, 'Chasing the big time: Football Apprenticeship in the 1990s', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1996), pp. 10-21.
[19] The number of registered youth in 1974 was 103,432. It rose to 1,210,408 in 1985. Tallec Marston, 'An international comparative history', p. 214.

largely dependent on a host of parent volunteers. Len Oliver, a longtime Director of Coaching for the DC Stoddart youth league in Washington, D.C. recalled his own first-hand experience of the many parents in the late 1970s who took on all sorts of volunteer roles including coaching and even buying materials to build their own goals.[20]

The United States Soccer Football Association (USSFA) had felt the wave coming and initiated its first coaching school in 1971 with sixty-five coaches graduating in that first year.[21] However, with so many new young players, both boys and girls, joining clubs, finding coaches was a challenge. In the spring of 1971, one of those girls who was 'tired of standing on the sidelines while her younger brother... played AYSO soccer' was Brandyn Scully and she was adamant about playing.[22] So her mother volunteered to coach when no one else stepped in. After three years, and despite not knowing a thing about soccer when she first started, Mrs. Scully was regularly volunteer coaching up to twenty hours per week.

After the school and the club, the last of the three traditional sporting spaces was the church. This final section covers the Salesian *oratorio* with its roots in Italy, the French Catholic *patronages* and the Catholic Youth Council in St. Louis, America. The role of the priest was paramount. He was the spiritual and sporting educator and mentor.

Inspired by the various associations and congregations of his day and before, including those started by St Philip Neri, Don Bosco ran an *oratorio* for the youth of Turin. He organized gatherings of theatre, music and faith formation.[23] The connection between the *oratorio* and football began in the 1920s but really strengthened after 1943 and the two become synonymous in the 1950s after the creation of the *Centro Sportivo Italiano*.[24] Archambault cites the memoirs of Italian priests who explained the Sunday catechesis schedule which included ball games and, as a result, 'obtained a considerable increase in the boys' participation'.[25]

The priest had a similar central role in the French *patronages* movement of the first half of the twentieth century. His role was described as 'sporting instructor, impresario, scoutmaster…able to

[20] Len Oliver, interview by the author, Washington D.C., January 23, 2006.
[21] United States Soccer Football Association, *1971 Official Yearbook*, pp.225-6.
[22] *Los Angeles Times*, 12 September 1974.
[23] Maurilio Guasco, 'Prémices italiennes: l'Oratoire de Don Bosco', in Gérard Cholvy and Yvon Tranvouez, *Sport, culture et religion: Les patronages catholiques (1898-1998) - Actes du colloque de Brest, 24, 25 et 26 septembre 1998*, pp. 39-49.
[24] Fabien Archambault, 'Il calcio e l'oratorio: Football, Catholic Movement and Politics in Italian Post-War Society, 1944-1960', *Historical Social Research*, 31 (1) (2006), pp.134-150.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 138.

speak about basketball games using the technical terms'.[26] Wahl has explained how the *patronages* movement chose football as its sporting standard and ultimately gave birth to the French football federation.[27] As a result, over the following decades youth continued to flood local clubs but those adult instructors (now licensed coaches as opposed to ordained priests) probably had a different focus than the earlier generation of clergymen who had mostly pulled out of the coaching roles and of the running of the patronages by the late 1960s. Jean Berthou has described his own experience as a local priest who spent most of his active ministry as a mentor 'taking care of the youth' between 1948 and 1972 in the *patronages*.[28] Berthou also held the role as the designated chaplain, or *aumônier*, for the national Catholic sports federation and attended the 1972 Olympic Games.

Across the Atlantic, another Catholic sporting movement was founded and promoted by the clergy. In late nineteenth century St. Louis, Missouri, the congregation of the Christian Brothers were known for their interest in sport. The order of Brothers who ran the school were intimately involved in the sports scene locally and organized 'junior teams' that played other local youth teams during the late 1880s.[29] Later, in the 1930s, Father Anthony Palumbo was recruited at St Ambrose parish and supported football in his local community.[30] By the 1940s, the city's Catholic Youth Council (CYC), overseen by Fr. Peter Dooley, boasted 'the most extensive soccer program in the country' through the organization of soccer leagues between parish schools.[31] The role of priests as spiritual and sporting instructors during this period in St. Louis is well summarized by Monsignor Lewis Meyer, long-time director of the CYC, who said that 'we always used to joke and we said when a priest was ordained, he walked out with a Bible and pair of soccer shoes'.[32]

Tomorrow's coach: an educator, mentor, technical expert…?

French historian, Alfred Wahl, has noted how, in the early twentieth century, football was a tool to inculcate youth with certain societal values in what he calls *l'école des vertus*, or the 'school of

[26] Yvon Tranvouez, 'Un type sacerdotal: le vicaire du patro', in Gérard Cholvy and Yvon Tranvouez, *Sport, culture et religion: Les patronages catholiques (1898-1998) - Actes du colloque de Brest, 24, 25 et 26 septembre 1998*, p. 315.
[27] Alfred Wahl, 'Les patronages et le football (1895-1918)' in Gérard Cholvy and Yvon Tranvouez, *Sport, culture et religion: Les patronages catholiques (1898-1998) - Actes du colloque de Brest, 24, 25 et 26 septembre 1998*, pp. 193-9.
[28] Jean Berthou, 'Du vicariate de patro à l'aumônerie nationale', in Gérard Cholvy and Yvon Tranvouez, eds., *Sport, culture et religion: Les patronages catholiques (1898-1998) - Actes du colloque de Brest, 24, 25 et 26 septembre 1998*, (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 1999), pp. 323-35.
[29] James Robinson, 'The History of Soccer in the City of St. Louis', (St. Louis University: unpublished PhD thesis, 1966), p. 32.
[30] Gary Mormino, 'The Playing Fields of St. Louis - Italian Immigrants and Sports, 1925-1941', *Journal of Sport History*, 9 (2) (1982), p. 11.
[31] Robert Baptista, 'A History of Intercollegiate Soccer in the United States of America' (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 1962), p.134.
[32] The author is indebted to Gabe Logan for passing on the transcript of his interview with Monsignor Lewis Meyer, on November 11, 1996.

virtues'.[33] If history reveals anything, it is that the role of the coach has been often defined by its context. The school enlisted coaches who were first and foremost educators in the wider sense of the word. Clubs sought to train coaches who were capable of technical and tactical instruction but also some moral and educational values. The relevance of the volunteer should not be understated as so much of sport relies on their goodwill. The various church related movements underscore the dual role of the spiritual and sporting instructor who held Scripture in one hand and a ball in the other.

As football continues its march of ever increasing professionalism and commercialization in today's sporting world, the coach's role perhaps needs rethinking in the light of its own history. This is all the more relevant today given the 'educational emergency', as described by Pope Benedict XVI, in which education has been reduced to the transmission of 'specific abilities or capacities for doing' rather than 'the formation of the person enabling him or her to live to the full and to make his or her own contribution to the common good'.[34] While the Pontiff never made specific mention to coaches per se, it is not beyond reason to extend his words to the realm of sport where coaches are often called on to focus on teaching skills and technique more than character formation and values.

The Catholic faith has the advantage of holding both an insider and outsider's view on the issue. The education of young people and the holistic formation of humanity are central concerns to the Church. Yet she can also step back and look on the sporting phenomenon with some critical distance and arrive at a diagnosis useful for those even indifferent to her analysis *prima facie*. It would be hard to argue, for example, that the six lessons for sport offered by Fr Lixey do not resonate with a secular sporting world: respect for oneself, discipline, teamwork, accepting defeat, being a gracious victor (humility), and perseverance.[35] The Church has often called for an alliance of faith and reason, faith and science. When rethinking the role of the coach, perhaps a dual approach of faith and sport could help redefine the coach as educator, as mentor and as technical expert unified in one person striving for the formation of the whole human person? Or in the words of the late St John Paul II:

> I wish to encourage the educational and social work carried out by all of you when you seek to propagate the true meaning of sport, not only in the world of competition and of sporting exhibitions, but likewise in the most common practice of sports: that is, in those activities that

[33] Alfred Wahl, *Les archives du football*, (Paris: Editions Gallimard/Julliard, 1989), pp. 76-9.
[34] Pope Benedict XVI, *Discorso per l'apertura del convegno della diocesi di Roma nella Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano*, 11 June 2007. Original text reads 'Perciò l'educazione tende ampiamente a ridursi alla trasmissione di determinate abilità, o capacità di fare ... lo scopo essenziale dell'educazione, che è la formazione della persona per renderla capace di vivere in pienezza e di dare il proprio contributo al bene della comunità.'
[35] Fr. Kevin Lixey, 'Sport in light of the Year of St. Paul and in response to the educational emergency', address to the Sports Symposium in conjunction with the XX Parafiada Games, John Paul II Olympic Center, Warsaw, July 7, 2008.

each person performs in order to increase his physical abilities and efficiency, for the good of the whole person.[36]

[36] Pope John Paul II, 'Address to FICEP assembly', Rome, April 3, 1986, in Norbert Müller and Cornelius Schäfer, eds., *The Pastoral Messages (Homilies, Angelus Messages, Speeches, Letters) of Pope John Paul II That Refer To Sport (1978-2005),* p. 29.