



THE ROLE OF THE COACH AMONG YOUNG PLAYERS OF THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

José Manuel Bermejo

University of the Balearic Islands, Spain

Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of a program of intervention among coaches and athletes; to evaluate attitudes in favor of fun and fair play in sports and, on the other hand, hard play, gamesmanship, the need for victory and cheating as attitudes that go against prosocial behaviors. The sample includes football teams with a total of 636 young athletes (615 boys and 21 girls) with an average age of 12.50 years and an age range between 10-16 years in the juvenile, infant and cadet categories during the season 2016-2017. An adapted version of the Spanish Questionnaire for Fair Play Proceedings (EAF) was administered at two different times. The results show that young athletes value sport positively as fun at two moments of the season. The program was shown to be effective, although not significantly, in terms of a decrease in the values of gamesmanship, cheating and victory between the first moment and later moments in the program. Hard play, on the other hand, did not present an improvement in the program.

Key words: *fair play, gamesmanship, cheating, victory, fun, hard play*

Introduction

Sport has to some extent developed contradictory and antagonistic values in recent times. On the one hand, it promotes positive values such as fair play, sportsmanship and other prosocial attitudes [1-3]. In addition, it helps to improve physical condition and the learning of technical skills [4]. On the other hand, it is quite common to find antisocial behavior on the playing field. These behaviors are often reinforced by various psychosocial factors that surround the young athlete, including parents, coaches and colleagues [5, 6].

Currently, professional sport can transmit counter values to other areas, such as educational sport: win at all costs, humiliation or discrediting. However, it also has a great educational potential that, channeled correctly, can serve to educate and train citizens to be more civic minded and better educated.

For all these reasons, the social environment of the participants for the development of prosocial behaviors and avoidance of antisocial behaviors in sport has

been shown [7-9]. Prosocial behavior is understood as voluntary behavior intended to help or benefit another [10], with examples in sports such as helping an opponent to get up off the ground or congratulating another player. Antisocial behavior, on the other hand, is conceived as voluntary behavior designed to harm or disadvantage another with examples in sport such as trying to hurt an opponent or deceive the referee [7,11].

With regard to football as a medium contact sport, there are previous studies such as those carried out with soccer and basketball players, associated with less mature moral reasoning and with aggressive tendencies in sport and in daily life [12]. These findings were corroborated in another study that revealed that extensive participation in sport of medium contact between young people corresponded with judgments that legitimized aggressive behaviors in sports [13].

Other research has also observed that extensive participation in medium-contact sports, in this case soccer and basketball players, has had a negative effect on fair play

opinions and behavior [14], and as the category in which it participates increases, greater importance is given to victory and a greater permissiveness of hard play is produced [15, 16]. Sportsmanship seems to be being lost in youth sports because of the excessive emphasis on result and victory at any price [17].

Coaches are one of the main factors on which both prosocial and antisocial attitudes and behaviors depend [18]. Their behavior, their relationship with the players, as well as forms of communication with them, are some of the variables that influence the education of athletes. The training of coaches is a fundamental factor to ensure certain guarantees of adequate behavior of athletes [19, 20]. The type of teaching used by coaches (technical, tactical and mixed) also influences a coach's communication and the behavior of his players [21].

Nowadays, educational programs in values through sports are being successfully implemented [22-24]. These programs are based on the fact that sport continually raises problems that arise as a result of social interaction and, therefore, can be an adequate vehicle to redirect this situation. The problem is that, at present, sport has its own structure, and

its own objectives. To a large extent, success in competitive sport is measured based on the objective results of the competition.

This article presents the work of the program "We Put Values into Sport", a program of awareness raising on the importance of the role of the coach in different teams and categories of football and basketball on the Balearic Islands, and whose basic premise is the improvement of prosocial values in sport (having fun) and a decrease in antisocial values in sport (such as Gamesmanship, hard play and cheating).

This study tries to verify the hypothesis that an intervention in the style of communication and the creation of a motivational in a pre-test situation by coaches will positively affect athletes after enough of a period of internalization for subsequent assessment in a post-test situation.

Method

Participants

The sample includes federated soccer teams from the Balearic Islands with a total of 636 young teenagers (615 boys and 21 girls). Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample in this study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics according to category and gender

	Novice	Juvenile	Cadet	Total
	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)
Boys	181 (29,4%)	203 (33%)	231 (37,6%)	615 (100%)
Girls	16 (76,2%)	2 (9,5%)	3 (14,3%)	21 (100%)
Total	197 (31%)	205(32,2%)	234 (36,8%)	636 (100%)

Instruments

The cheating disposition questionnaire in sport [25] was based on a questionnaire about attitudes towards decision-making derived from morality in youth sports [6]. This base questionnaire is aimed at studying young people's attitude towards cheating in sports. In the case of the CDED, to obtain a cheating disposition questionnaire, a backtranslation system was used by experts on the two scales "Acceptance of cheating" and "Acceptance of gamesmanship" of the AMDYSQ-1.

It consists of six items and is composed of two subscales of three items each: predisposition to the acceptance of gamesmanship and predisposition to the acceptance of cheating by measuring each of them with a Likert scale of 5 points (from 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree).The CDED questionnaire obtained a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .78, while the gamesmanship acceptance subscale had a value of .74, and the acceptance of cheating obtained a value of .63. When analyzing the items separately, reliability was obtained at .72 to .78, not improving the

reliability of the subscales or the CDED when eliminating any of them.

The correlation between the two subscales of the CDED was of .57, which supports a relative independence (albeit with a higher value than the original studies of the AMYDSQ-1 scale) of the acceptance of cheating and the acceptance of gamesmanship, but does not allow them to be dissociated completely. On the basis of the AMDYSQ1 scale [6], the adaptation to Spanish of the two subscales of acceptance of cheating and acceptance of gamesmanship have demonstrated characteristics of reliability and factorial validity that make them sufficiently viable to be used in a population of young competition athletes.

Scale of fairplay attitudes (EAF): Prepared for Boixadós [26] in the works of doctorate and master's research. It consists of 22 items that form 3 subscales to assess the attitudes of football players towards toughness, victory and fun, in situations related to football. The alpha internal consistency indices take values of 0.74, 0.66 and 0.60, for each of the hardness subscales, victory and fun respectively [26]. The structure of this questionnaire is made up of a Likert scale with a response from 1 to 5, based on these values: 5 = Strongly agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly disagree. The EAF is validated in a research study [27] where this scale was applied to football teams and professional soccer teams.

Procedure

A presentation is made in the executive's boards of the participating clubs explaining the objectives of the program and its implementation with the coaches and athletes in two moments: early season (pre-test situation) and end of season after the application program of the intervention program by coaches (post-test situation). The program consists of marked intervention phases. First of all, at the beginning of the season a training session is held for several coaches on fair play in school sports with two key blocks: adaptive motivational climate and positive communication style. Secondly, the CDED questionnaire is administered to

athletes, both in the control group and in the experimental group. Subsequently, it is agreed with trained coaches to make an audiovisual record of their interventions in training or matches. Finally, the researcher advises and analyzes in an individual interview the actions recorded reinforcing the positive ones and commenting on the improvements. The CDED questionnaire is once again administered to the control and experimental group athletes at the end of the season to assess the suitability of the intervention program with coaches.

Permission was obtained from the federations, clubs, parents and through the voluntary acceptance of the athletes to carry out the program confirming the confidentiality of the data. The questionnaires were administered before the commencing of a training session in the presence of any of the researchers to resolve possible doubts. The estimated time for completing the questionnaires was about 20 minutes.

Analysis of data

The average was calculated for each participant according to the answers given. Next, an analysis of the descriptive statistics of the items of the questionnaire was carried out, evaluating the significant differences between the variables, means and degree of significance, T test for paired samples was made with the SPSS 21.0

Results

Taking as a starting point the data presented in table 1 of the previous section, it is observed that there is an unequal sample between the male gender (96.6%) and the female one (3.3%). The distribution by categories is quite balanced.

Table 2 shows the distribution of control and experimental groups. The difference in the value of fun between the control group and experimental group after intervention draws attention. While the experimental group increases its value, the control group decreases. The control group, having not received intervention, may have a lowered score due to the effect of the end of the season. This fact can also condition the slight

increase that appears in both groups in the hard play variable.

Gamesmanship, in its part, decreases in both groups after the intervention period. The program takes special relevance in the values of victory and cheating. While the control group

increases its value in the victory category in the second period, the experimental group decreases its value. Furthermore, cheating diminishes its score in both established groups, although they are not significant results.

Table 2. Differences of means of the results of the CDED, EAF and subscale questionnaires in soccer and the moments before the program and after the program.

	Control Group (N=152)			Experimental Group (N=484)		
	Pre X (DS)	Post X (DS)	Sig (p)	Pre X (DS)	Post X (DS)	Sig (p)
Fun	4.10 (.79)	3.93 (.77)	.100	4.04 (.84)	4.12 (.76)	.135
Hard play	2.60 (.75)	2.72 (.53)	.085	2.71 (.62)	2.76 (.55)	.161
Victory	2.76 (.63)	2.78 (.51)	.081	2.76 (.58)	2.58 (.58)	.000**
Cheating	2.17 (1.17)	1.93 (.94)	.065	2.22 (1.05)	2.04 (1.02)	.006*
Gamesmanship	2.84 (1.15)	2.68 (.99)	.047	2.94 (1.05)	2.66 (1.11)	.000**

Discussion

The role of the coach is a topic of great relevance in the field of sports initiation. The influence that the coach has on achieving positive experiences is a recurring theme in the psychology of today's sport [28].

Results obtained allow us to contrast the importance that the fun factor has for our young players, both before and after the intervention. Conversely, the concept of victory, cheating and gamesmanship lose strength after the intervention program, although not in a significant way.

Even so, values are ahead of the curve which indicates a tendency to accept those behaviors commonly called antisocial. This fact is corroborated by previous studies [29-31] where acceptance of gamesmanship was demonstrated (although to a lesser extent) and cheating in young people from different sports disciplines.

According to the analysis extracted, gamesmanship is accepted mostly in situations that suppose an advantage in the limits of the legality of the game and not through physical violence. These behaviors are often seen as part of the game [25]. It could be understood to a certain extent that the acceptance of gamesmanship was due to the complexity of some norms not being fully understood or by

individual representations of the rules of the game by athletes [32].

Results obtained in the area of hard game are important. After the intervention the coaches' results continue in an ascending line. The very nature of contact sports and the end of the season can be justifying arguments for this trend. The reason is that these sports contain additional elements that can increase the effect. Interaction with an opponent, direct confrontation, constant comparison with others, the attempt to maintain superiority in the game, etc., leads the athlete to judge his intervention in terms of regulatory success. Therefore, it is more likely that in these sports athletes may more likely develop the tendency to use comparison criteria with others to evaluate their competence.

Taken together, this study showed how broad involvement in medium contact sports influences fair play in sports. Based on these data one might ask if the nature of these sports is such that there is an inevitable transgression of the rules through gamesmanship, cheating or hard play. Although this sport may have a stronger potential to increase ego-orientation; that is, a climate of competition aimed at victory at all costs will be the way in which the social context of sport is structured, therefore conditioning the results.

Socialization of players and the resulting interpretation of success and failure later determines goal orientation. In other words, it determines the real intentions for practicing a sport, aiming for victory, improving competence, exerting effort, and learning. In this sense, the motivational climate that surrounds the athlete is a key factor. Different studies show this relationship [33-35].

In all probability, what we have achieved through this study is to verify that football is motivated by recreational and fun interests as far as young athletes are concerned.

As sport has become an industry, it has reduced the beauty born of the joy of playing for its own sake; professional football condemns what is useless, and what is not profitable is useless. The game has become a spectacle, with few protagonists and many spectators. Football has become an observed event, and the show has become one of the most lucrative businesses in the world [36].

As for the coaches, it would be very interesting to incorporate in their work plan during the training sessions strategies aimed at encouraging the initiative of the players to show attitudes and sports behaviors before different critical situations during a match (for example the injury of a player of the opposing team, a strong entry or anti-regulation action directed against an opponent, an unfavorable situation, an arbitration decision perceived as incorrect or unfair, inappropriate behavior in the stands, inappropriate behavior by a coach...).

Limitations of this study which should be taken with caution include: the unequal

distribution of sex in the sample and the impossibility of establishing causal relationships between variables despite this being a pre-post longitudinal study that offers results on changes that occur spontaneously during the season.

For future lines of research, it would be helpful to be able to compare the results between school-age teams and elite teams and high competition. The fact that young footballers imitate the behaviors of the figures they idolize would give us clues as to how to instill and transmit at all levels the values of fair play. In any case, more empirical studies are needed to see what the causes of the deterioration of fair play are, what are the psychological intervention strategies and what effects these strategies will produce in young athletes.

If intervention programs in values of fair play have an impact on a global level, those instructions that foment aggression and lack of respect for rules and people could be progressively limited, promoting the values of responsibility for one's actions and all those that help the athlete in terms of proper ethical and moral behavior during the game.

The opportunity to teach values through sports should be maximized. Sport must promote learning for life. Having sportsmanship is not about following the rules but being part of them and believing in them. Close collaboration between all socialization agents (parents, coaches, federations and managers) can improve values of fair play in football.

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CORRESPONDENCE

José Manuel Bermejo

University of the Balearic Islands
Spain

E-mail: jm.bermejo@uib.es

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