



**Opinion**

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# The Coach's Role in Training and Education of a Sports Practitioner in the Context of the Problematic of Doping in Sport

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## Opinion

The role and responsibility of a coach can be seen from many angles and different points of view. If we focus exclusively on its functional essence, we can say that training can be understood, in a simplistic way, as the act of making people learn and develop skills, i.e., as a set of organized actions, with the specific purpose of intentionally promoting learning and the development of something, by someone, to which we could also add, and with the appropriate means to the nature of that learning and that development.

That is, the coach can be seen exclusively as the professional, whose specific purpose is to conduct this training process, and whose functions are defined, then, based on a set of competences resulting from the mobilization, production and use of various pertinent knowledge (scientific, pedagogical, organizational, technical-practical, etc.), properly organized and integrated according to the complexity of the concrete action to be developed in each situation of professional practice [1]. So far so good. But a coach is (or should be) more than that.

A coach is also, by definition, a trainer. And it is by looking at the etymology of the word that we truly understand its full meaning: forming is just that, it is molding, it is starting from a starting point and evolving, building, adapting, giving shape in a certain sense. With a certain intention, with a goal. And this can be more or less easily achieved depending on the relationship of complicity established between the coach and the athlete, that is, it is especially important that this relationship be pleasant and that a climate of positive affectivity and mutual trust be established [2].

When we move to the specific area of competitive sport, we literally enter another championship. One would say that it is natural to relate the relentless pursuit of high performance and overcoming individual limits with sports records, whether in national, international, and Olympic competitions. Yes, it's natural. But this is precisely where the trouble often begins.

Perhaps this is precisely the motivation that stimulates athletes, but also involves coaches and doctors in the pursuit of these new records, in the sense of achieving glory, even if this means crossing the limits of human capacity. It is here that the "one-million-dollar question" arises: could it be that all the records known and registered until today, were beaten only with the natural use of the body, through training, and physical and psychological performance? Unfortunately, this is not what history has shown us, as we often see the annulment of records and the withdrawal of medals and titles from so many athletes who are (were?) idols of millions of people around the world and whose example, precisely because of the scope and impact it has, it should be immaculate.

A few months before the Olympic Games in Seoul, in 1988, the head of the Canadian medical team, William Standish, assumed that the drug-free Olympic ideal was no longer possible, declaring: "we have solid information that confirms that drug use that improve athletic performance is an epidemic." And more: Standish also stated that "there is an increasing use, among young athletes, of anabolic steroids and other substances that improve performance" [3].

Effectively, doping is a topic that represents one of the most outstanding and worrying problems in sports reality, not only because it distorts the "truth" of it, but also because, despite boosting performance, it could endanger the athletes' health [4]. The fact is that, despite Law nº 38/2012 of 28 August approving anti-doping legislation in sport, in accordance with the rules established in the world anti-doping code, unfortunately, by itself, this rule is still not enough to dissuade many athletes of the consumption of illicit substances, as evidenced by the countless cases that we often see, read and hear in the media.

And what is, or should be, then, the role of coaches amid this scourge? In a study carried out by Patriksson & Eriksson [5], whose objective was to evaluate the training program

for coaches in Sweden, the athletes were asked about several subjects, among which, precisely, how they saw the importance of the coach's role. Interestingly (or perhaps not), the figure of the coach was considered the most important of the sports phenomenon, especially for young athletes, in particular those with leadership characteristics, such as charisma.

Also, according to Gomes [5] the most surprising aspect of contact with charismatic leaders is the simple and clear way in which they present what they want from their work groups, a fact closely associated with the firmness with which the best paths to follow are communicated. This definition is in line with the writings of Conger and Kanungo [6] who describe charismatic leaders as people who seek to change the problems that hinder the exercise of their activities, seeming to be oriented to function as "agents of change". This concept is fundamental since it implies the notion of influence capacity. And as stated by Howell & Avolio [7], it is these leaders, these "transformational individuals", who are concerned with guiding their behavior by acceptable ethical and moral standards, who often defend the need for all team members to assume a responsibility. honest attitude, both with teammates and with opponents and referees.

It is here that the so-called philosophy of a coach resides, which is nothing more than a set of standards by which the coach will influence, teach, and model his athletes. According to Hardman and Jones [8] [9] this philosophy must be built on four concepts, namely: axiology (what the coach values), ontology (the meaning he attributes to the training process), phenomenology (reflections on the experience of being a coach) and ethics (what the coach judges about what is moral and immoral). And talking about ethics in sport means reflecting on the guiding values of action, the ideals that govern sporting activity.

In conclusion, this is, for me, along with its importance in sport, the true role of a coach: to lead by example, by commitment, by motivation and by striving to improve, but always, always, with respect for others. all stakeholders, and guiding its conduct by values, truth, and ethics. After all, as we have seen, a coach forms, molds, influences. Often children and young people, who are nothing less than the society we want to see and have tomorrow.

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