

FAIR PLAY IN TRAINING AND CLIENTS SPORT SITUATIONS

“Fair play” – the key principle of sport competitions was formed as the basic and main idea of Olympism by Pierre de Coubertin. The respect of rules, fair and friendly behaviour among sportsmen themselves are emphasized. The “fair play game”, however, has to be considered in further extent, the relationship of the coach and a client, herein in athlete. There comes the new specification of the coach – athlete relationship, where the athlete becomes a client to certain extent. One cannot exist without the other and although the coach always takes the back seat he/she is the one to set the rules and forms of cooperation, contents of the training process and participation in competitions, etc.

The ethic of coaching in sport, fair dealing between the coach and athlete appears to play a key role in fair play following either on the professional, recreational or commercial level. However, there are significant differences in the coaching approach on recreational or professional level where the training process must focus on the physical and mental load providing the best possible preparation for competitions. Therefore there is less “kid-gloved work”. Shall the client – a top athlete succeed and meet goals? Then he must bear and stand the load on or sometimes beyond acceptability. This is, by itself, related with ethic and is an integrated part of preparation.

We are forced to contemplate the ethic of sport coaching not only due to tell-all practice of some coaches (bringing either positive or sometimes tragic results for the client), but also due to well known background of coaching methods especially those modelling critical situations. Such critical situations in the sport performance are e.g. lacking behind the leaders, situations contrary to the presumptions, weather inconveniences, unpleasant drawing of lots, facing stronger and better opponent, sudden life threatening situation, etc. Based on his knowledge and practice, the coach has to make the decision and estimate

whether the athlete can bear and stand the model physical and especially psychological load. Psychology is another area that a good coach shall master. The ethic perception differs with different sport. The limits vary between athletics and water slalom or boxing and wrestling.

The key issues of fair play shall result from the idea of “non nocere” i.e. do no harm. It is understood not only as not causing a physical injury, but also avoiding any psychological trauma. Coming out primarily from this point of view, the relationship ethic must stress the principles of: doing no harm, no cheating, no boasting, no torturing, no leaving in troubles. There is no doubt, that these rules are not violated when dealing with a client – recreational sportsman, unless the client wishes to do so. Sometimes it might bring some benefit to let a hobby sportsman touch the bottom and experience the feelings of professionals and realise that being a professional athlete is not just a bed of roses. At the same time we may discover hidden potential and the process may become more beneficial with higher volume of released endorphin. The feelings may reach the state of a marathon runner finishing his track for example. The border of acceptability is however very, very individual. The acceptability principles must be obeyed when coaching individuals as well as groups. With groups, we have to consider the dynamics of relations among the members when under pressure and so follow the ethic of sport coaching within the limits of fair play. Suitable approach must be chosen to get the group ready for critical situations. In general we have to respect the principles of peaceful competing within the rules of the particular sport. Unfortunately we witness situations when the fair play spirit is suppressed by an individual or a team in a fight at the top level for material values (start money, prize money, bonuses from sponsors, etc.) at any cost, including doping, fouls, deliberate rule violation, taking short cuts, using banned accessories, etc. The main

cause of this state is too much commerce in professional sport.

Model practice of critical situations is absolutely necessary in today's life in the world of more and more demanding sports and adrenalin action search to balance lack of excitement. The development of many sport activities is predetermined this way.

For this reason there have been developed many new activities where we can meet new expressions such as: fullcontact, extreme, outdoor etc. At the same time a question is risen, whether the coach, who makes the decision of the critical model extent is also a well qualified professional in the field of psychology, as we have mentioned before? As an example, we may describe the comparison of a boxer, fighter or karateist, who is not always a good member of special armed forces, because he has fixed in his subconscious that even the toughest part of fight is not real. There is always a referee, coach or supervisor to finish the match. An athlete may even give up the fight which is a part of sport moral or we may experience knightly behaviour of non attacking opponent's wound etc. These subconscious manners cannot be accepted with a special force member, otherwise a mission or operation might be threatened, lives of hostages put in danger or life of a "fellow in arms". We do not want to say that these special forces lack ethics, but in comparison with sport competition it is extensively held back.

At the same time a question over ethic arises, whether we can apply a pressure on the ethic principle of team spirit – all for one, one for all, even in training of critical situation demands.

We have agreed, that both of the mentioned situations need a specific view.

In the first case, where we consider the preparation of a client – a recreational athlete, we must carefully search for the limits of practice. Exposition of the client to non-standard conditions may result (more frequently than coaches may think) in frustration or trauma of the client. Personal experience of psychoterapists would for sure result in agreement. We do not think, that we may get rid of personal responsibility by only informing on the practice procedures, pointing out the risk and gaining the client's agreement. Through this move we get rid of certain legal responsibility, protect our position and position of other participants however at the same time we enter a polemic between legal and moral ethics. Do all legal steps are also morally good? It should be, but often is not. The law is not almighty, the common sense and sound judgement should be exercise by everyone. Furthermore, each coach should be able to bear responsibility for own acting

and its effects. Exaggerated effort to create so called "rule book" for every situation results in drop of responsibility and hiding behind nonsensical provisions of law or other rules. Own personality is weakened, the responsibility transfers to somebody else.

As an example of "boundary" approach we can use an avalanche trap simulation as a part of preliminary ski-alpinism course. In a good will, the client undergoes disproportional hazard as well as the coach and the rest of the group. We may provide the best information, prepare and secure the whole situation in the best possible way, however, we can never control all the unwanted variable that may affect the whole situation. The reality and effect of many of these may be discussed. But, for sure, there is one, that always applies – the individual trapped, although voluntarily, in the avalanche. His skills, knowledge, inexperience in such a situation, inner thoughts, hidden health disorders...

Let's take a closer look at the feelings of the participants of this simulation. Their experience can be categorised in three groups. The first group describes the experience as standard load, meaning that: "Yes, it was a kind of an unpleasant situation, but we were sure to be discovered within 3 minutes. We did what we had been recommended, breathing was more difficult we experienced what we had expected".

The second group includes similar appraisals: "It was very unpleasant. We were surprised how difficult breathing was, we hadn't expected how heavy snow could be. We did everything as instructed, but breathing was worse than we what we had expected".

Comments of two people (of total 15) who experienced feeling of panic are the third category: "The minutes under the snow were endless. We did everything as instructed but we could hear nothing. We thought they would not find us. We could not move at all, were choking, pressing of the snow was enormous...". One of the participants suffered from nightmares, in which the situation repeated over and over. We can discuss, whether we should not diagnose the mood and apprehension of the clients, who have participated in similar expeditions. The situations when even very fit and mentally resistant individuals react in a non standard way under extreme conditions can be helpful to us as well.

And here we are getting back to the beginning of our contemplation: "Has the coach got sufficient awareness of psychology? Has he got enough qualifications to judge the risk for physical and mental health as well?" As each coach is an individual. He/she is another unwanted variable participating in the training process. Shall we look for

ways to solve the ethic problems of exposing the clients to non-standard loads, one of them could be creation of a certain concept of critical situations in various sport branches i.e.: professional sport, recreational sport, commercial outdoor activities, etc. The concept shall be formed with participation of the specialists of individual sport fields, pedagogues, doctors and psychologist that would assess the risks and from their point of view (health and fitness, pedagogy and psychology) and evaluate the groups of particular athletes.

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