

The drop-outs in young players

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Introduction

Competitive performances is the result of numerous components that determine success at sports or demotivation that can result in drop-out phenomenon. One of the main components, which causes young people to play sports, is certainly the motivation that the practice of sport is intended primarily as an opportunity for socialization and fun. Young athletes need a continuous reinforcement of motivation to develop the emotions and feelings, to test their skills and simultaneously gain recognition by peers and adults to prevent the abandonment of the sport activities. **Methods and Materials** The study was conducted over the course of two years on 150 young athletes, football practitioners, who were between 14 and 16 years old and registered at Football Schools in the City of Naples. The purpose of the research was to demonstrate the reduction in drop-outs through the reinforcement of motivation, by acting on the variation of the training and on inclusive and collaborative capabilities of the team. The young people were given a survey with eight questions related to the components of motivation. **Results and Conclusions** The results show that by varying the content and duration of training and by working in the direction of providing cohesion to the team, the dropout ratio among young athletes has been reduced from 18.5% to 0% at the intermediate stage. Specifically, out of 125 athletes attending the football schools, 25 were the dropouts. The training courses were planned and developed jointly with the staff of the football schools both for the first and second years of the research. These school need to be identified not only as places for teaching football but as educational and training places.

Keywords : soccer, motivation, young athletes, drop-out

Introduction

The practice of sport is an important phenomenon in the context of human activities. Specifically, the psychophysical changes (Bara, 2007) during adolescence affect self-control mechanisms that often affect the competitive performance. Talent and hard training are the main factors that contribute to the success of an athlete (Mazzeo et al., 2013). The proper development of motor behaviors allows young athletes to actively participate in sports. However, we must consider that motor activity (Hotz, 2000) do not represent the effect of a simple sequence of functional impulses (Naughton et al., 2000). Instead, they explain the complex cognitive process that determines the quality of services and relationships with others and with their surroundings.

One of the main components that determines the performance quality is definitely motivation (Vitali et al., 2015) to play the sport because young people love sports, mainly as an opportunity for socialization and fun. However, the analysis of motivation (Giovannini, Savoia, 2002) has multiple characteristics and subjective. Therefore, it is essential to focus on the reasons that motivate young people to participate in competitive sports. The term motivation is understood as a psychological variable puzzle, where intrinsic motivation (Ryan, Deci, 2000) serves a predominantly private function (i.e., expansion of emotions and feelings of self-recognition and verification of their capacity). Meanwhile, extrinsic motivations (Chandler, Connell, 1987) is applied to the models and demands of the native culture, the degree of social and economic confirmation, the greater sense of security and attainment of benefits, appreciation and material rewards.

As part of the motivation concept (table I), as a guideline, we can identify the phenomenon that concerns a person who engages in an activity to learn, improve and broaden his/her skills. Additionally, we determine how to approach the phenomenon itself that is intended to demonstrate the abilities of athletes through the comparison with others. In this case, the subject believes that his/her performance is worthy of note, in the measure in which he/she excels and differs from others with special recognition by adults (Prunelli, 2002). In general, teenagers who participate in sports tend to be popular, become important, are noticed by others, and achieve the highest levels of performance, even if they have a desire for freedom. This condition requires continuous reinforcements by parents, friends and coaches. Young athletes do not fail. However, it is the important for them to acquire a sufficient level of physical conditioning or to be a part of a group, a team. Thus, by engaging with other peers, they can achieve significant competitive goals.

The research has been developed over the course of two years. The research shows the dropout incidence (Figueiredo et al., 2009) in relation to the questionnaire, which consist of eight items (table I), related to changes in motivation, that was proposed to the combined sample of 150 young athletes (Malina et al., 2007), football soccer practitioners, at schools in the City of Naples.

To achieve the set objectives, the study took into account both the subjective variables (e.g., constancy (Ceï, 2005), commitment, enthusiasm, and individual skills) and the objective variables (e.g., environment, opponents, lucky coincidences or their absence, and inherent difficulty regulating the activity).

Table I- Motivation variables

ITEMS	NOTES
Anxiety pre-competitive	The anxiety level of the athletes before competition leads them to obtain, often, lower performance than their own and others expectations. This can lead to reduced self-esteem and make the intolerant athlete the competitive situation with invalidation of motivational subjective level. Another reason is that the pre-race anxiety is expressed physically with gastrointestinal spasms, muscle tension, headaches, heart and respiratory rate accelerated, enhanced sweating, little reactivity and sometimes "psychomotor block";
Lack of successes	If expectations are not met many times, it may happen that the guy charges the disputed sporting negative connotations. The training time can become overwhelming enough to push the athlete to implement mechanisms of denial and escape (drop-out);
Monotony of training	Repeatability, uniformity and consistency of training stimulations can sometimes aggravate the condition of self-perceived by the athlete fatigue. E 'has been noticed that the guys are willing to develop various training and customized and that this could decrease the feeling on the workload;
Reduced availability Free time	The athlete committed to a competitive level has little time for the relational and social life. Few are the friendships that can be consolidated outside the sporting environment, there are few moments of leisure and often the athlete ends up being "marginalized and excluded" from the life of "class group" and meetings with friends. Shortly, also it remains available to cultivate hobbies and interests that are not directly related to sport;
Difficulties cohesion with the group	The group, especially in the adolescent stage, is crucial since each individual, within a group, meets the basic needs of belonging, affiliation, contact, social exchange and relational. The group is united and cohesive, leaning towards achieving the same goals, if we organize activities, meetings, extra-sporting meetings that allow to deepen the knowledge and discover, eventually, common interests. The risk of "non-group" is the lack of mutual aid, the prevalence of individualism, so it could happen that play are only individuals who have been together for a defined time of training and competition and has not been identified collaboration and synergy of intent.
Finding other interests	A teenager needs constant stimuli and incentives, to acquire new knowledge in all fields, not only in the sport. The absence of more and different stimuli very often determines the choice to give up, to abandon;
Academic difficulties	To face two challenging activities such as school and soccer at a competitive level, and very often with professional connotations, is often experienced with great difficulty. When parents and / or teachers complain about poor school performance exert pressure, not necessarily explicit, so that the boy would reduce or leave the sport and should focus more on the study. This condition puts the teenager faced with a choice that initially led him to hide the continuation of the sport but with the passage of time can cause you to abandon one or the other activity entering into the vortex of the drop- out;
Adolescent crisis	The rapid change of the physical parameters and the consequent difficulty of accepting one's body, determine, often, changes, and stagnation in the technical-athletic performance. The imbalances determined by the evolution of new psychophysical structure, are often faced with the increase in load during training or the extension of the same. This, despite the commitment and efforts, they do not produce, often, adequate results so the boy tends to detach from the source of discomfort and out of business.

Materials and Methods

Addresses and Objectives

The sample (150 adolescent athletes (Giorgi, 2004) football practitioners between 14 and 16 years of age) was monitored for two years by recognizing the changes that occurred due to the strengthening (Eurispes, 2000) or decrease of interest in the practiced sport after the administration of the questionnaire that included eight questions (table III) that summarized the potential accident variables on sporting success and dropping out. No additional variables was considered (e.g., the relationship between the athlete and the parents) because this involves a personal sphere. However, at the same time, this personal sphere is significant. Furthermore, in the opinion of the research team, this variable contains additional variables that are difficult to monitor except by the specific program intervention. The selected athletes, divided into 25 units groups (graphic I). These athletes are the members of six amateur sports associations (companies) in the city of Naples, which are marked A, B, C, D, E, and F (table II). The athletes determined their field position on the football field that is made of artificial turf. In all teams two athletes were the goalkeeper (Montesano, 2016).

The planned research activities during the first year (October 2014 - May 2015) are as follows: direct observation of the behavior of the boys during training and competitions to focus on the relationship with the coach, integration into the group, commitment shown during the training and competitions, commitment to balance school and sports activities, impact of achieving results, interests and activities outside of football, and incidence of pre-competition anxiety on sports performance.

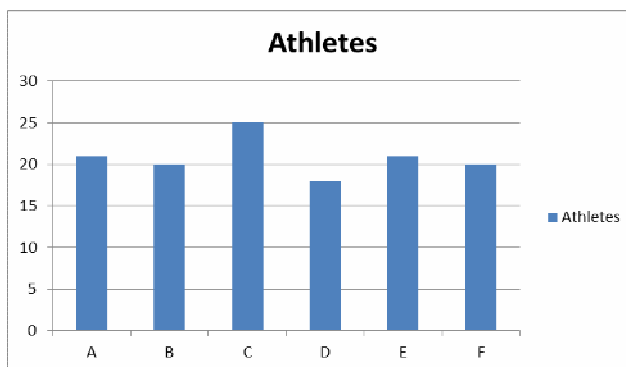
The commitment of the boys was demonstrated if they participated in two weekly training sessions and a competition on Saturday or Sunday. The training program (Weineck, 1996) has been agreed upon with the technical staff and consisted of joint practice sessions. The latter, with an average duration of 75-90 minutes, meant to develop coordinative and conditional abilities with technical drills (Vatta, 2006) and short games, often on the field that was smaller than the regulatory field.

At the end of the first year, the questionnaire was given again (Table III). It showed few deviations from the initial results. The significant finding is the ratio of dropout of approximately 18.5%, which represents the abandonment of sport by 25 boys (graphic I). These dropouts are distributed between the Companies with the exception of the company C that has not reported any dropouts.

Then the research team then continued the course during the second year (October 2015 - May 2016) with 125 young people divided between the Companies (Table II) as follows:

Table II - Team and Athletes

Team	Athletes
A	21
B	20
C	25
D	18
E	21
F	20



Graphic I – Team and Athletes

The plan of the training program was reformulated to include the athletic and technical sessions. Their number increased from two to three. Additionally, the amount of content has been increased as well as the duration of session (60-80 minutes). The long training session is the criterion variable. It is designated as the most strenuous workout session during the second week. The exercises were always carried out with a soccer ball (Bonfanti, 2008) including the beginning of the session. The exercises were carried out on a regulatory field, which made it possible to provide more time and more space for games between the boys. Another approach was to organize the groups, once a week, for an outing to a pizzeria or pub.

Materials and Equipment

- Football field to eight made of synthetic turf
- Regulation football field made of synthetic turf
- Soccer clothing for training and competition
- Regulation ball n. 5, Cones, Ropes, Step, Obstacles h 20, 30, 30 cm, Manual stopwatches, Detection grids

Results

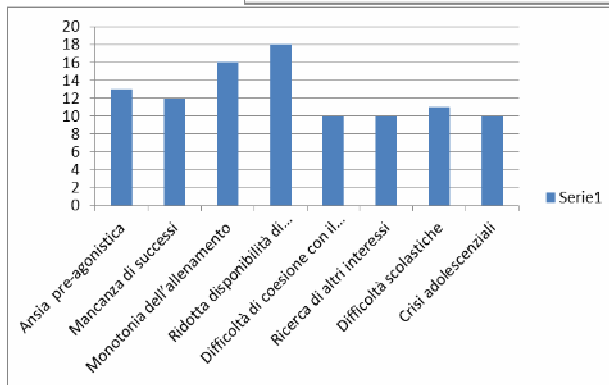
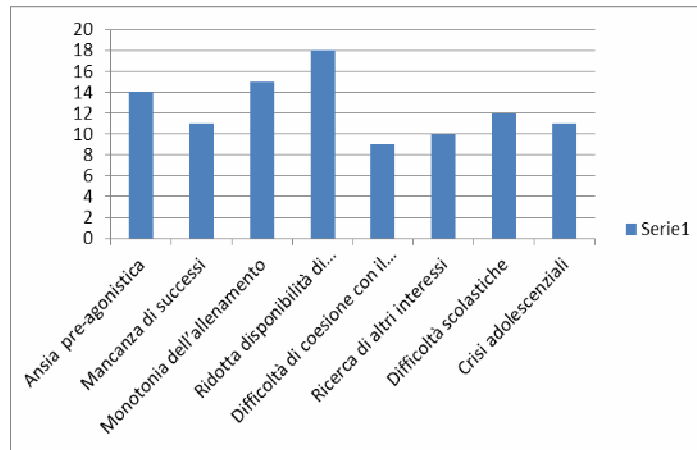
The initial survey (graphics II) anonymously collected the responses that were given to eight questions. The survey showed the prevalence of anxiety before the competition (Sassaroli, Ruggiero, 2002), monotony of training and the lack of free time. In total, 150 young players actively participated in the program. However, at the end of the first year (graphic III), the dropout phenomenon accounted for 25 boys (no goalkeeper) with an incidence rate of approximately 18.5%. Negative feedback was highlighted by the Company D (7 missing athletes), while there were no dropouts for the Company C. During the second year of the course, 125 athletes attended the program. The results (graphic IV) showed a significant sporting success with a decrease of both the percentage of anxiety before the competitions, monotony of training, and cohesion problems with the group

(Mondoni, 2016). In contrast, but it not in opposition, the percentage of reduced availability of free time has increased, justified by both the increase in training sessions, weekly commitment of group outings, and the search for other complementary interests with sporting challenge.

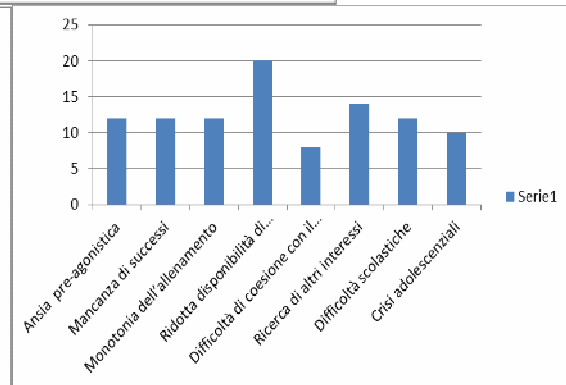
At the end of the study, we have registered two dropout cases. However, these have not been reported because they are not considered relevant to the objectives of this study. These dropout cases are related to the difficulty resuming the program after the sports injury.

Table III – Percentages of the items of the questionnaire survey

ITEMS	% initial	% intermediate	% final
Anxiety pre-competitive	14	13	12
Lack of successes	11	12	12
Monotony of training	15	16	12
Reduced availability Free time	18	18	20
Difficulties cohesion with the group	9	10	8
Finding other interests	10	10	14
Academic difficulties	12	11	12
Adolescent crisis	11	10	10
	100	100	100



Graphic II - Initial Survey



Graphic IV – Final Survey

Discussion

To play at a competitive level sports activity, it is necessary to refer to the diverse range of rewarding factors that encourage and maintain high adolescent desire to *continue playing ... despite everything*. The sporting success boosts self-esteem and intrinsic interest in the sport. Conversely, a failure (Caldarelli, 1995) may adversely affect the self-confidence and encourage reduction in the availability to time to continue the sport. The role of the trainers-instructors is important. They should sensitize the athletes to effectively manage the successes and point out the real causes of possible failures. Additionally, the trainer-instructors should remotivate the subject to resume training with greater commitment and without focusing on external influences (e.g., bad luck, accidents, etc.) as the failure factors.

The increase and strengthening of motivation in sport (through inclusion and continuous stimulation to train) assumes the achievement of challenging objectives that must be understandable, realistic, specific and

achievable in the short, medium and long term, which direct the athlete to perform to effectively modulate adequate and ever better performance to avoid commitment transitioning into dropout.

Sport practiced at a competitive level requires a very high level of motivation because of the continuing commitment that athletes must maintain to achieve the expected results. If the motivation decreases, demotivation gradually takes over with a syndrome of burn-out or emotional exhaustion (Pellegrino, 2000), or a feeling of total lack of physical and mental energy, depersonalization with a feeling of inadequacy, reduced or zero esteem. This manifests itself as hostile attitudes towards people in the sport environment (coaches, physical trainer, etc.) and results in a dropout.

Conclusions and Proposals

The study shows that competitions at an early age are ineffective and most likely lead to dropouts. This is not to be confused with an early engagement in motor activities and play. Proper planning of workouts enhances growth and personal achievement, not only competitive achievement or performance. This must be supported by the synergic action of an expert team that takes care of the physiological and psychological aspect so that the teenager can cope with the awareness of the inevitable auxological crisis and can avoid choosing drastic activities and slip into the dropout phenomenon. The workouts should be entertaining, interesting, educationally valid, with goals related to the age and level of maturity of each athlete. The coach does not have to be an authoritarian leader, but authoritative, should not be too permissive, instead be empathetic, motivating, stimulating, and enthusiastic. Football schools, in addition to fulfilling the fundamental task of teaching football, should be identified as educational places where a team of experts accompanies the growth of adolescents, help them develop confidence in their own abilities, contains and demotivates aggressive urges that during the period of extremely delicate development can prevail and push the individual to choose to abandon the activity.

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