

Retrospective and current attitude of coaches to a sports psychologist

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Abstract

Objective of the study was to identify the attitude of coaches to the activities of a sports psychologist in the context of the psychological support of a sports reserve, as well as the actual "request" of coaches to improve psychological competence.

Methods and structure of the study. A survey was conducted in the form of a questionnaire, in which coaches in various sports of the North-West of Russia took part (St. Petersburg, Leningrad Region, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Vologda): retrospectively in 2016 - 222 (130 men and 92 women, average age - 37 years, average experience - 16.5 years), actual in 2022 - 143 (75 men and 68 women, average age - 41 years, average experience - 18 years). 64 trainers took part in the assessment of preferences for topics to improve psychological competence (2022, 2023). Fisher's test was used to assess the significance of differences.

Results and conclusions. The trend of ambiguous attitude of coaches to the activities of a sports psychologist persists. More than a third of coaches (2022) are ready to turn to a psychologist on their own to work with an athlete (team) and almost all are ready to recommend parents to athletes, if necessary, contact this specialist. Retrospectively and currently, the positive attitude of coaches towards a sports psychologist is associated with a constructive experience of interaction, including through increasing psychological competence with the help of this specialist, as well as with effective help to athletes (team) through parents' appeal to a psychologist with the consent (on the recommendation) of the coach.

Keywords: *attitude of coaches to the activities of a psychologist, factor (condition) of psychological support of a sports reserve, psychological competence of a coach.*

Introduction. Combining the efforts of significant adults to create a healthy environment in building, above all, children and adolescents, a long-term sports career, clearly focuses on the interaction between them.

Formation of favorable conditions for the timely solution of a complex of sports training tasks by children and adolescents in accordance with the stages of training and age-related developmental tasks, the creation of internal and external resources for building a "double" career for athletes as the goal of psychological support is specified in the complex of tasks

aimed at providing psychological assistance in overcoming difficulties in adapting to the requirements of sports activities in general and a specific sport and stage of sports training, in particular, to long-term sources of mental stress [2]. The attitude of a coach to the activities of a sports psychologist is a factor of psychological support [1], therefore, his repeated studies to increase the effectiveness of this process in the structure of sports training (sports career) seem reasonable.

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Results of the study and their discussion. More than 40% of coaches consider the activity of a psychologist in a sports school to be expedient according to retrospective and current studies (Table 1).

Positively minded coaches believe that, first of all, a psychologist should work with parents (45.3% and 49.2%), then with athletes / team (36.8% and 39.68%), management/administration of a sports school (14.7% and 3.2%), and the coaching staff should not be the focus of his attention (3.2% and 7.9%) (Table 2).

Approximately one in four noted the inexpediency of the work of a sports psychologist for the following reasons: “interferes with the training process”; “distracts the athlete”; “does not understand sports”; “I don’t know what exactly he does with the athlete (team)”; “The coach is a psychologist himself.”

The experience of working with a psychologist in their own sports career and professional activities in 2022 was noted by a smaller number of coaches: 40.6 and 33.3%; 34.4 and 28.6%, respectively (differences

at the trend level according to the criterion φ^* - Fisher’s angular transformation), more often - negative, regardless of the year of the study.

In our opinion, the lack of interaction with a psychologist in one’s own sports activities can also lead to disinterest (lack of demand) in cooperation with him and as a coach (the stereotypical attitude “I didn’t have a psychologist, so why do you need one”).

A third of the respondents (31.5% and 32.2%) did not decide on a position on this issue, which allows us to consider them as potential supporters of the activities of a psychologist in a sports school, subject to successful interaction with athletes and coaches and a positive experience of working together.

Additionally, as part of the current study, coaches were asked questions on the behavioral component of their attitude towards a sports psychologist (Table 3).

More than a third of coaches would be interested in contacting a psychologist on their own, and almost unanimously, the study participants would orient the parents of their athletes to involve a sports psychologist.

In other words, the well-known stereotype “the coach is a psychologist himself” directly prevents them from turning to a specialist, but indirectly, through their parents, they are ready for the participation of a psychologist in their professional activities.

Achieving a positive experience of joint work either through the resolution of a specific situation with an athlete (team) by a psychologist, or through a solution by a coach of a specific situation with an athlete (team), parents using the psychological knowledge and techniques recommended to him. The second approach seems to be more advantageous, because the coach is aware of their usefulness, fixes the objective result and is ready to accept psychological knowl-

Table 1. Results of a survey of coaches regarding the activities of a sports psychologist (2016 - n=222, 2022 - n=143), %

Is the activity of a psychologist in a sports school appropriate?					
Yes		No		Difficult to answer	
2016	2022	2016	2022	2016	2022
42,8	44,05	25,7	23,8	31,5	32,2

Table 2. The results of the choice of trainers of the subject of the activity of the psychologist (2016 - n=95, 2022 - n=63), %

Who should a psychologist work with first of all?							
With athletes / team		With parents of athletes		With coaching staff		With administration	
2016	2022	2016	2022	2016	2022	2016	2022
36,8	39,68	45,3	49,2	3,2	7,9	14,7	3,2

**Table 3.** "Readiness" of coaches to apply to a sports psychologist (2022 only – n=143), %

Yes	No	Difficult to answer
Would you be interested in contacting a sports psychologist?		
38,1	44,4	17,5
Would you recommend that parents, if necessary, contact a sports psychologist?		
95,2	4,7	-

edge from another source, which helps to increase his psychological competence.

Coaches of the Higher School of Basketball Coaches and participants of the advanced training program "Psychological Aspects of Sports Training" (within the framework of the "Sport-Norm of Life" project, Lesgaft National State University, St. Petersburg) (n=64, no more than 3 answers) in 2022/23 the following topics were identified as the most popular ones: "psychological techniques in the activities of a coach (methods of regulating unfavorable conditions of athletes, mental self-regulation, formation and maintenance of motivation of athletes and teams, etc.) (28.9%), "constructive communication with athletes' parents" (25.6%), "prevention and correction of interpersonal conflicts in a group/team" (20%) and "management of a sports team" (14.4%).

Conclusions. Common in the results of retrospective and current research is the preservation of the ratio of positive, negative and indefinite attitude of coaches to the activities of a sports psychologist. At the level of the trend, the opinion of coaches has strengthened in preference for the work of a psychologist with the parents of athletes. The formation of a

positive attitude of the coach to the psychologist is associated with a successful experience of interaction, as well as with the help of athletes through the appeal of parents to him with the consent (on the recommendation) of the coach. Determination of the demand for topics to improve psychological competence can be considered as a guideline in the development of advanced training programs for coaches, while increasing the sample and differentiation taking into account the type of sport is appropriate for their more targeted development.

References

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