

SENIOR - NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAM



**Senior - National Team Program
(2009-2012)**



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1 Introduction

The purpose of training does not only involve the physical, psychological and educational aspects of the players' development, but also the aspects regarding the place of basketball within the political, marketing and economic framework. There are more and more requirements that basketball must meet, which means shorter preparation time to achieve the top results. In order to achieve the best results, basketball players go through certain selection and training processes.

Here we are going to talk about creating a fast and efficient process for moving from young selected basketball players to successful senior national team players. This process occurs over a long period, since players at full playing maturity require 5 to 8 years of specific training. We are talking about the systematic, continuous and programmed process that would lead to the improvement of physical, functional and technical/tactical abilities of talented players in the service of the national team program Under 16.

Our task is to provide direction for a promising player, to invest in his playing and competitive skills in order to develop him into a top player.

From the very beginning the main focus is placed on the team selection and team work.

From the very beginning the main focus is placed on team selection and team work. As for the players, modern basketball not only has strict requirements for the team, including physical characteristics and abilities, but also requirements of technical

performance regarding the players' personality, health status, psychological and social status, as well as pedagogical and ethical aspects. On the basis of the above mentioned requirements, we come to the conclusion that the knowledge base required for modern basketball exceeds the knowledge of any one expert.

The selection and elimination of players represents a complex problem, and the selection criteria need to be assessed for the following characteristics:

- morphological characteristics
- physical characteristics
- functional abilities
- competition quality
- personality characteristics

The coach should play the role of the guide, organizer, planner and coordinator of the team. The coach, with the help of his expert associates, needs to make the final selection and team analysis decisions. This means that in order to achieve good results, a successful coach must have the qualities of a successful business manager.



2 The National senior team

The showcase of the BASKETBALL SA is the senior national team. Usually the main public focus is on the senior national team, which participates in various high level competitions. The interest of the national federation is to have a team which will perform well in the long run. Sometimes results should not be the priority, but the BASKETBALL SA should always have a clear idea what they want to achieve in the future. Short and long term plans must exist and winning is not possible all the time.

Competition and competition results are the key points in modern basketball. The coach is expected to increase the competitive skills of his players and the team as a whole, but must not forget the requirements of strict and authoritative team management. The national team represents a specific structure where adaptation to norms and the rules of conduct play a very important role. By the adaptation quality we measure the national team results. Each player must understand and develop his role as an active participant.

2.1 Team selection

The criteria of a player's quality does not only include his individual qualities, but his capacity to incorporate his personal qualities into the team structure. Accordingly, the team consisting of the best players is not necessarily the most successful one (there are numerous examples). The most successful team is the one that incorporates the qualities of all the individual players. Basketball as a dynamic game is greatly determined by the coach's role. The selection of the competition team does not only comprise the general selection, but also sub-selections (sets, substitutions, tandems, team lines). The ultimate goal of the national team selection refers to formation and maintenance of the top competition team. Formation of a high-quality player is just one of the goals, and therefore it is subordinate to the ultimate goal of the senior team formation.

The mottos for seniors are:

- play hard
- be a good competitor
- be motivated
- be disciplined
- be adaptable to stress
- be the winner



2.2 Program goals

1. Expert and organizational structure and work programming
2. Structure and dynamics of patterns that determine the formation, organization and management of the team.
3. Contents and tempo of activities
4. Homogeneity of players
5. Group ideology that accounts for differences in group solidarity and the quality of individual and group goals.

The team efficiency should be higher than the sum of the individual players' qualities. This goal can only be achieved by applying the appropriate methods and expert principles.

Experience has proved that one top sportsman usually encourages the formation of new top sportsmen. To that effect the national team must have at least one player who is outstanding in his class. The player who has outstanding competitive and general athletic qualities plays an important role in the achievement of top results.

The national team selection homogeneity should be observed from the aspect of the players' qualities, the level of athletic fitness and the level of competition. A member of the national team feels powerful because he is a member of a powerful team, and the national team is more powerful because it is made up of the best players.

The coach's role is often associated with the problem of authority. Within the national team, the coach is not the only authority, but his role is to govern the authority issues. The coach is the leader, and as the first among equals, he is also crucial for all management and decision-making. The coach must be an expert and the leader. The expert role of the coach implies his role of a psychologist and the leader of young people who admire and respect him.

The leadership is closely connected with the issue of authority, and the coach links his own authority with the players whose roles include some elements of leadership:

- the coach - the team leader
- the coach - the playmaker
- the coach - an extraordinary player



2.3 Perceiving the relationships within the team

Subjective perception and evaluation of the relationships within the team should be addressed by two experts - the coach and a psychologist or an experienced physician, if necessary. Expert observation is not only focused on deeper understanding of the players' behavior in their mutual communication, but also on understanding and predicting their behavior in various situations on the court.

The aim of this evaluation is to obtain the following information:

- how a player sees himself in relation to the team
- how he sees other players and the team as a whole
- what is his attitude to the forthcoming duty or task, group and collective activity
- what is his attitude to the coach, the expert board and other people involved in the national team's activities.

Information that can be obtained during training sessions and games:

- with whom the player chooses to cooperate while playing
- with whom he does not choose (because he does not see him)
- with whom he practices shooting
- with whom he additionally works out

Information that can be obtained during meetings:

- a need to be close to the group during a meeting or in a locker-room, or physical distance between the players
- position on the bench

In addition to the above, the following choices should also be taken into consideration:

- choosing a seat in a plane, bus, restaurant, choosing a room-mate, a partner for leisure activities

These observations may be important for the evaluation of the players' behavior and they can provide relative information important for selecting narrower segments of the team (group, tandem, the team leader). Such information can also be helpful in preventing some detrimental situations.



2.4 The team's composition , technical and tactical profile

Since five to eight years of training are required for the development of full playing maturity, it is optimal if the numbers of players on the national teams are selected from within that range. The team of 15 players should consist of:

- 3 players between 18 and 21
- 10 older players, between 21 and 27
- 2 players older than 27

Young players are the game carriers. The competition experience of older players and the competition enthusiasm of younger ones should be complementary.

The team should have at least three players who, owing to their playing and competitive qualities, can carry the game of the whole team, and at least five players who are capable of integrating themselves into the playing and technical/tactical concept of the team. The team must have at least two specialists; players specialized in specific technical/tactical skills and five promising players. One of the players should be a potential top player.

The team can hardly tolerate more than two players who do not fit the standard profile, for example, a player with an extraordinary tendency to dominate or a player with the lack of competition firmness. The national team cannot tolerate rivalry between two players.

The evaluation of all members on the national team (including those who are not in the narrow selection, amongst the 13, 14, 15 players), but specifically those who increase the training quality by their involvement, also helps a younger member of the national team to become a part of it and to coordinate his abilities, aspirations and obligations.

The players in the senior team have solid comprehensive techniques whereby specific individual technical skills are an advantage, but not the key values. On the level of technical skills and individual tactics, the team should meet at least two requirements:

1. To perform homogenous and synchronized individual actions in defensive tactics
2. To achieve synchronization of different individual technical/tactical skills when playing offence

The synchronized action of the players having different technical/tactical performances should be the most powerful asset of the team.

Offence - the uniformity and harmony of the outcome is achieved by distinguishing the differences in the quality of the individual's participation.

The power of defense is achieved by almost equal technical and tactical performance.



2.5 Preparations of the team

The senior national team has preparations lasting 5 to 6 weeks, and could be preceded by a short 7 - 10 day period when the wider selection of players is involved. The formation of a top competition team requires:

- Team staff formation
- medical preventive measures
- discipline
- rules of conduct
- training process
- motivation
- organization
- plans elaboration (process programming)
- testing
- statistical monitoring
- information and theory development

2.6 Selection of players

Monitoring of candidates for a specific cycle should be achieved through:

- Internet
- Conversations with players and their coaches
- Watching games and monitoring the players' fitness
- Discussions with agents
- Playing career planning
- Coordination of plans with national championships
- NCAA competitions
- NBA/WNBA camps
- Permanent monitoring and acceptance of new players (team rejuvenation)

2.7 Training process

The first test camp can accommodate approximately 20 players (7 - 10 days) and is the preliminary part which will be followed by the basic phase of the preparations. Three micro-cycles include working on defense, offense, transition and physical preparation for testing the skills of players around the team. At the end of this phase, it is desirable to play 1 or 2 games. This will help us to have a clear picture of the candidates on whom we may need to rely on in the future. If it is possible, they can be a part of a national B team.



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The main preparations last for 5 to 6 weeks and the following tasks should be completed:

1. Physical preparation

- Individual development programs
- Mobility, stretching
- Strength development - stabilization
- Combination of technique elements and group tactics in order to develop physical preparation
- Work in blocks - mixing of elements (there is not much time, but physical preparation is of great importance).

2. Technical preparation

- Depending on the phase of the training process - at the beginning, focus on speed of performing the technique elements (breakaway, shots, passes, pivots, jumps, game contacts, etc.)
- Passing technique (receiving pass - output elements emphasized) and the speed of performing technical elements of an action.
- Shooting. Each training session is dedicated to shooting.

3. Tactical preparation

- Individual (situations 1/0, 1/1, 1/1+1, both defense and offense)
- Group (taking most of the time)
- Collective (defense and offence line-up as well as 4/4 situation defense, offence and transition).

4. Matches - training matches

- 8 - 12 matches
- It is important to take into account the opponent's strength
- Simulation of the championship tempo (cycles of playing training matches)
- Preparation for matches (game between players at the beginning, and later preparation for opponents)
- Working on fitness

5. Psychological preparation

- Individual
- Group
- Collective



Psychological preparations represent a measure and harmony of all factors which are the keys to success. All individual players and the team as a whole must be prepared to dedicate all of their efforts to achieving results. The quality of mobilization preparations is one of the most important factors in transforming the team's potential into the ultimate success. A reputable coach will seldom tolerate defeat if his team is playing against a team with lesser qualities. The coaches always respects their opponents, even those who are far behind their teams, and they will easily mobilize their players with such an attitude - it is important to adapt the level of efforts, willingness, and self-confidence, but also to have respect for the opponent (each opponent wishes to win, not only to play a game, even when playing the biggest favorite).

2.8 Supplementary segments

1. Prevention of injuries and treatment of injuries

In cooperation with a physician, physical therapy specialist and coach, it is necessary to make a plan on returning injured players to the team. More serious injuries should be treated and evaluation of injuries should be made in cooperation with the team physician.

- It is necessary to provide treatment for an injured player
- Parallel training for facilitating the introduction into the training process
- Return and readiness for play

2. Testing

- Testing of functional abilities
- Testing of physical skills
- Testing of technical and tactical skills

3. Statistical monitoring

- Training
- Training match
- Opponent



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4. Information and theory development
 - Theoretical preparation
 - Theoretical process (learning how to gather and process information). This is achieved as from the first day.
 - Analyses of the opponent's matches
 - Theoretical preparation on the court and in the locker-room (meetings)
5. Recording
 - Training
 - Training matches
 - Competitions
 - Opponent
 - Finding video recordings of the opponent and preparations for the first games
 - Preparations for scouting during competition - data gathering

We become familiar with our play in order to have better understanding of the system we want to implement, to play more easily as well as to be acquainted with the opponent, individual qualities of players and specific aspects of their play.

2.9 The final phase of the preparations

This phase lasts between 5 and 6 weeks. After the camp activities we have a clearer picture on the team composition. All the players who will be on the team should not be there from the very beginning. For these players it is necessary to provide easy entry and continual preparations. This phase is divided into three sub-phases:

Preparatory phase lasts approximately 2 weeks or 4 micro-cycles (one micro-cycle lasts 2 to 3 days). It begins with testing (1-2 days). The first micro-cycle is the introduction into the training process. The second, third and fourth are basic and they cover the following elements:

- Technique with focus on ball handling technique, catching, passing, movement technique, basketball stance (lower stance, maintain the body in stance), good timing, start.
- Group tactics with parallel work on defense and offence from the start. In the beginning this will consume most of the time, but this aspect must be given full attention. It is important to focus on corrections from the very beginning. Improvement and correction are one of the most important elements in the course of the preparation process.



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- Collective tactics (tactics regarding defense, offence and transition) is the task present during the entire preparation period, even during the competition, between games.
- General physical preparations (aerobic-anaerobic exercises), by turns (morning training sessions are for quick regeneration of the body after a long competition season). After one or two weeks, the body will be able to deal with new loads and strains.
- Specific physical preparations.
- From the very beginning, a combination of elements (specific physical preparations indoors in the afternoon, in combination with regular training).

The head coach should prepare at least two different defensive strategies against individual offense, one defense on the full court, one zone press defense and two different zone defenses. In reserve, team should have one combination defense (one, four or two, three zone defense). For the offense the team should have, besides standard plays, at least two special plays which should be used during the appropriate moments of the game.

At the end of this period it is desirable to play one or two games. The competition requirements should be met, i.e. games should be played as a function of maintaining the competition tempo.

Basic phase - coordination lasts 2 weeks or 4 micro-cycles

Improvement of technical/tactical details

- improvement of the physical condition - specific physical preparations on the court and in the gym, stretching - stabilization at the beginning and at the end of training
- further improvement of tactics in the game conditions (meetings, theory, practice)
- specific shooting practice (players are not under pressure yet)
- practice in series (this type of training is first introduced with seniors)
- special tactics improvement
- formation of lines - cooperation - guards - forwards - centres
- tandem search
- playing deep and wide
- specific aspects of the national team become significant
- game with tall players
- understanding between the coach and players
- improvement of technical and tactical details

The team consists of 16 players, where 10-12 play, 7-8 are used in a game, 2-3 win, and tandem is formed.



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Technical and tactical correction and coordination is important, as well as the improvement of knowledge in dealing with information and the capacity to make efficient preparations in a short period of time. Two tournaments (3 + 3 games), should be played, as a simulation of the actual competition (similar to the dynamics of the competition). Development of the winning tactics, fatigue adaptation (we must win even in the most difficult situation).

The tasks for this period

1. tactics correction
2. maintenance of physical fitness
3. coordination through training and games with special competitive tasks
4. individual work before and after training (free throws and additional practicing)
5. information gathering -meetings and scouting
6. intensive work on shooting
7. treatment of injured players (in order to have them back on team as soon as possible)

All these elements are significant, but the most important is to consider the end of this period as a completed process. The players are ready for the competition and now they can focus on details.

Pre-competition period lasts 7-10 days or 2-3 micro-cycles, with 1-2 games

- Transition from intensive work to a specific competitive regime
- Adaptation to specific dynamics that would be present at the competition
- Competition micro-cycles
- Fitness improvement
- Team lines and line-up

Tasks for this period

1. Functional technique - emphasis on shooting, accuracy in competitive conditions
2. Tactics for the first game in the competition
3. Fitness and psychological work



2.10 Competition period

1. Calendar of matches
2. Traveling plan
3. Coordination of fitness improvement
4. Work in specific micro-cycles (meeting + games).

The work in micro-cycles includes knowledge of information (scouting and capacity of the team to get activated and to provide its maximum skills). The purpose of gathering before the match is to achieve the highest level of readiness by appropriate information sharing and psychological preparation. For this purpose coaches and their assistants utilise a lot of information.

Fitness is achieved when all elements necessary for the play reach the appropriate level - it is no good to be in peak condition before the beginning of the competition. The level of fitness refers to the technical and tactical skills, physical and psychological preparations. Here it is important to increase the fitness as the competition is in progress, and to achieve peak fitness at the end of the competition.

During the entire competition period we practice with the emphasis on tasks that will face us in the next game. The players without sufficient court time or who do not play at all must have additional training.

In preparation for the games coaches have to be aware of the selection of the starting line-up which is conditioned by the selection of tactics, and the coach's concept of how the players should be involved in a game. Even the key players may be treated as substitutes, due to some tactical and competition requirements.

The national team is associated with efforts to increase and maintain the level of top athletic fitness which has been achieved. The national team offers possibilities to implement the game concept through the appropriate selection of players. In the national team, the play is created by the players' ability to accept, improve and enrich the basic concept. The coach needs to be able to sacrifice his own success for the success of the team, and thereby the mutual trust of the players is increased (as they are also expected to sacrifice something). Only the coach who is ready to sacrifice his own success may count on his players to adjust their attitudes and their habits, even those that contributed to their success. In that way, qualities are confirmed and improved, and **SUCCESS IS GUARANTEED.**