



Under 18 - 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.

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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.



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2 Under 18 National Team

The primary goals should be the formation of players - with physical improvement programs and learning new skills 50% and improving old skills 50%. Unlike under 16 players who are selected from younger categories, 70-80% of the national team members will have been in the training process for two years. At the age of 18 they will have spent three to four years in the training process. This is therefore no longer the time for primary selection, but rather is for specialization. It is important for the Basketball SA to take into consideration that for some players this year is their last year in secondary school and their final exams will be the priority for most of the players.

Many of these players play in the senior category, but for some of them this is the first under 18 competition year whilst some of them will have already been playing Under 18. Specialization will have already taken place with regard to players' positions.

The first position to be specialized at the end of the under 16 period is the playmaker while other positions to be played by other players are gradually identified.

All the time it should be emphasized that the national team is open, so competition should be encouraged and advantage should be taken of new opportunities (new players). The period from 16 to 18 years is the period for expanding the potentials - new tall players should not be ignored. All the rules that have been adopted for the Under-16 team should apply to this age group as well.

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Permanent team analysis and plan elaborations in this period will help the coach to formulate new solutions. In this stage of the process candidates are actively monitored and the selection becomes more defined. We must not forget that the basic goal is to 'produce'

and develop top players. Our program goals are not very different from those applicable to seniors, juniors and cadets. The concepts are the same, but the methods are different. The score is not the most important facet, but it should not be ignored. As with cadets, the score is present as a secondary objective. A young player should always remember and be proud of what he has achieved in his career. This will always be a part of his life.

As far as a young player's biological development is concerned, the hardening of his bones will be completed between the ages of 17 and 19. However, up to the age of 18 some new ossification points develop in the vertebrae, so caution should be exercised with static load on the spinal column. The muscle mass is increased, and between 17 and 18 accounts for 40% of the body weight. The cardio-vascular system reacts with more stability to physical strain, although there is still a tendency of the arterial



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blood pressure to increase with a maximum pulse rate of approx 200. Respiration is similar to that in adults. Between the ages of 17 and 19, players reach their full biological maturity.

According to their playing level and competitive maturity, this age group represents the most heterogeneous group with the potential for national team selection, provided that a well-organized selection system is applied. The level of physical and functional maturity may still be associated with some serious dangers in the case of inadequate

The period from 17 to 19 years is a period that can be associated with serious dangers in case of inadequate training strain.

training strain. This period is associated with the power development, which is mainly limited by an increase in muscle mass up to the age of 18. Strength/power is constantly increased and becomes more and more distinct after the period of sexual maturity between 17 and 19. It should not be overlooked that explosive strength is

caused by the function of speed that enables the achievement of immense force within a very short time period. We usually define this as jumping ability. The repetitive power is therefore achieved in order to make a number of quick and successive moves. Amortization power is relevant for the amortization movements of stopping, landing, etc. Relative power is very important for players who are not very tall.

Running speed is determined by mobility and power on the one hand, and the processes in the central nervous system, on the other hand. Genetic factors can play an important role in speed development. Speed should be understood as a complex of neurophysiological abilities that enable quick reactions or fast control over a certain space. Speed understood this way may be divided into:

- speed of neural and muscular reaction
- speed of individual movement
- movement frequency within a time unit
- speed of movements in space

Running speed is significantly increased by the length of the legs and their power. Speed and movement frequency attain their maximum level at the age of 14-15. Their increase is in accordance with the growth of leg muscles and the increase of leg length between 15 -18. In other words, the tempo of increase in running speed is considered as the function of power and growth (height), and so the maximum dimensions are reached at the age of 18.

Generally speaking, speed is part of the function of:

- other physical abilities (growth, power, endurance)
- training (improvement of motor habits or movement structure)
- special speed quality representing the cessation of movement (movement speed)
- maximum speed as the component of running speed.



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At the age of 18, the endurance development reaches defined values of oxygen consumption. Endurance is defined as an ability to maintain the assigned intensity and tempo of an activity during a longer period of time (counter-fatigue ability). General endurance is defined as an ability of continuous work of mainly moderate intensity. In physiological terms, it corresponds with aerobic abilities - aerobic work. Specific endurance of a basketball player can be defined as the ability to continuously use speed and strength, with high exertion of the cardio-vascular and respiratory systems.

The movement coordination at the age of 18 reaches almost optimal level. Coordination of movements represents a pre-condition for solid basketball technique. The coordination level comprises the coordination of several elements performed at the same time (complexity of several movements). Certain disharmony may occur between playing, competitive and psychological maturity. Very often a player may reach a certain level of athletic experience and solid competitive potential, but lack sufficient psychological maturity due to his age and his lack of life experience. This age is one of the most delicate periods in life, characterized by the difficult problems that a young person has to solve within a short period of time (problems regarding identity, authority, future profession, the opposite sex etc.). Emotional crises, conflicts, resistance, giving up, and uncommunicative behavior are the inevitable (and normal) characteristics during this stage of development.

In this period also, social and psychological development problems can be encountered. Some social development problems include:

- fitting into a new environment
- new school
- entering senior teams
- getting acquainted with new coaches (in senior teams with which a player will work in this new period)
- more duties (training and matches)
- professional orientation (school - advanced education - basketball)
- social popularity
- rational use of time (training, rest period, school)
- influence of agents



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Some psychological issues include:

- Having been an important junior player, a player suddenly becomes the 12th, 13th or 14th player on a team
- How to handle sitting on the bench as a substitute player (individual training and development of physical skills)
- Reasonable management of daily duties (economic management of work duties, twice daily training work - fatigue and rest between training sessions - with a focus on spiritual development and preparation for these new activities), ensuring a balanced diet as a pre-condition for a quick recovery between training sessions and for further development (nourishment accounts for 30% of physical preparation).

2.1 Preparation of players for a competition

The National team consisting of players under 18 has five to six weeks of preparations. Everything that has already been said about the under 16 team will also apply to the under 18 National team.

- a) Team staff formation
- b) medical prevention
- c) discipline
- d) rules of conduct
- e) training process
- f) motivation
- g) organization
- h) plans elaboration (process programming)
- i) testing
- j) statistical monitoring
- k) information and theory development

The mottos for an under 18 player during this period:

- play hard
- play fair
- be a promising player
- be a good competitor
- play with enthusiasm
- be coachable
- be disciplined
- be a team player
- be the winner



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The player formation goals should be specifically applied to the National team. The game segments must be adapted to the players' biological development and its restrictions. Unlike cadets, 50% of activity should include learning new skills, and 50% should include improvement and corrections.

2.2 Selection of players

Unlike under 16 national team, where selection accounts for approximately 60% of the definite structure, with an under 18 player it is 80-85%. Here the best and most promising players are included. The period between under 16 and under 18 should be the most productive period of the player's development and the identification of his playing qualities.

2.3 Training process

1. Physical preparation
 - Individual development programs
 - Mobility, stretching
 - Strength development - stabilization
 - Combination of techniques and group tactics in order to improve physical preparation
 - Work in blocks - mixing of elements (time is limited, but physical preparation is of great importance).
2. Technical preparation
 - Depending on the phase of the training process - at the beginning, focus on performance speed and the technique elements (breakaway, shots, passes, pivots, jumps, game contacts, etc.)
 - Passing technique (receiving passes - output elements emphasized and the speed of performing the technical elements of an action).
3. Tactical preparation
 - Individual (situations 1/0, 1/1, 1/1+1, both defense and offence)
 - Group (taking most of the time)
 - Collective (defense and offence set as well as situation 4/4 defense, offence and transition).



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4. Matches - training matches
 - 8 - 12 matches
 - It is important to take into account the opponents' strengths
 - Simulation of the championship tempo (cycles of playing training matches)
 - Preparation for matches (own game at the beginning and then preparation for opponents later)
 - Getting fit
5. Psychological preparation
 - Individual
 - Group
 - Collective

2.4 Supplementary segments

1. Prevention of injuries and treatment of injuries
 - Provision of treatment for an injured player
 - Parallel training for facilitating the introduction into the training process
 - Return from injury 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 matches
 - Opponent
4. Information and theory development
 - Theoretical preparation
 - Theoretical process (learning how to gather and process information) - this is achieved as from day one
 - Analyses of the opponent's matches
 - Theoretical preparation on the court and in the locker-room (meetings)



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5. Recording

- training
- training matches
- competitions
- opponent

We want to become familiar with our play in order to have a 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 together with specific aspects of their play.

2.5 The final phase of the preparations

This phase lasts between 5 and 6 weeks and is segmented as follows:

The 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, maintaining the body in stance), good timing, start, etc.
- Group tactics (parallel work on defense and offence from the start)
- Collective tactics (tactics regarding defense, offence and transition) is the task present during the entire preparation period and even during the competition and between games
- General physical preparations (aerobic-anaerobic exercises, by turns)
- Specific physical preparations
- From the very beginning, the combination of elements (outdoor training sessions in the morning, specific physical preparations indoors in the afternoon, in combination with regular training).

Offense and defense systems should be practiced in this phase and a team should be ready to respond to various defensive tactics used by an opponent. The team should prepare one special offense, to be used in critical moments during the game. It is also important that the coach talks a lot with his players during this phase. Coaches have to be aware that players also need rest and this has to be carefully balanced.



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At the end of this period it is desirable to play one or two games, and if there is no opponent, players should organize a game amongst themselves - 8/8.

Basic phase - the coordination lasts 2 weeks or 4 micro-cycles and the main focus should be on the improvement of the technical/tactical details:

- improvement of the physical condition - specific physical preparations on the court and in the gym, including stretching - with stabilization at the beginning and at the end of training
- further improvement of tactics during game conditions (meetings, theory, practice)
- specific shooting practice (players are still not under pressure)
- practice in series (this type of training is first introduced with seniors)
- special tactics improvement
- formation of lines - cooperation - guards - forwards - centers
- tandem formation
- playing deep and wide
- specific aspects of the National team become significant
- game with tall players
- understanding between the coach and his 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 tandems are formed.

The tasks for this period are

- technical and tactical correction and coordination (players should learn to listen to the coach's words - this must be learnt as well).
- tactics correction
- development of the winning tactics, adapting to fatigue (we must win even in the most difficult situation)
- playing 4 to 6 games. The format of playing the games should be similar to the dynamics of the competition.
- maintenance of physical fitness
- coordination through training and games with special competitive tasks
- individual work before and after training sessions (free throws and additional practice)
- information gathering -meetings and scouting
- intensive work on shooting
- treatment of injured players (in order to have them back on the team as soon as possible)



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

- Transition from intensive work to the specific competitive regime
- Adaptation to specific dynamics that would be encountered during the competition
- competition micro-cycles
- fitness improvement
- team lines and sets formation

Tasks for this period are

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

2.6 Competition period

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

During the entire competition period we exercise and practice with the emphasis on the tasks that will face us in the following game. The players with no sufficient court time or those who do not play at all must have additional training.

In younger categories, where the primary aim is to create players i.e. learning and improvement, games are a part of the training process and they contribute to the improvement in knowledge. The coach and experts should create the best conditions to achieve that aim - win the game, and achieve the best possible standing.