

The role and importance of team leaders' skills for group/team dynamics in sport

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Abstract

In team and sports circles, leadership today is a key aspect of sporting success and achievement. In the last two or three decades, numerous studies have been conducted that deal with the role and skills of team leaders in sports performance, the assessment of leadership and its impact on team building, their effectiveness and dynamics.

This article examines the role and importance of team leaders' skills in representing them in sport, while assessing the key competencies of a leader through the prism of different leadership styles and ideas. By identifying the main leadership skills in sports, the article tries to present and analyze what are some of the strengths, qualities and competencies that build these leadership skills and how they persuade teams to perform in sports.

Keywords: Leadership, Sports, Skills, Competencies, Role, Teams

Introduction

Undoubtedly, today leadership is among the most key elements of achievements and successes in sports, incl. in team sports. As the main leading foundation in people management, modern research is characterized by an extremely wide range of definitions and definitions of the term "leadership". In recent decades, questions about leaders and their skills to achieve goals and the performance of teams in sports have been the subject of much research - in the theory and practice of leadership development. Science sees many different taxonomies and typologies proposed by leadership as a construction.

In modern sports, leadership is an extremely important concept in the management and performance of athletes and teams. Leaders are the people on the team who persuade others who are involved in key changes, lead the athletes and inspire, influence and guide them. Leadership is the coach's ability to persuade his team, to make it achieve the desired results "while doing everything possible for it" (Armstrong, 2014:641). This is a process that develops and presents the future vision of the group and the team, motivates the athletes, ensures their commitment. As early as the middle of the last century, authors defined leadership as "an influential process aimed at achieving the goal" (Stogdill, 1950:3).

The topic related to the leadership skills of coaches for the performance of their teams in sports is extremely relevant today. These activities are in accordance with the achievement of the goals of the teams, with the specifics of the work of the sports clubs and the individual players as an individual and character.

In the context of all this, the role of the effective participant in the process of achieving good sports results appears, who is not only a motivating figure and a key mediator between the team and achieving the goals of the group. This is the role of the sports leader. He is at the forefront of planning, implementing and reporting on everything the team achieves in the entire team performance management process.

In the present study, the focus is on leadership competencies, the role and importance of team leaders' skills for performance in sports - a topical issue that has attracted the attention of a number of foreign researchers in recent years.

The study defends the statement that today the impact and constant changes in the field of sports are accompanied by changes that not only require adaptation, but also the necessary effective methods and approaches to what is the potential future in developing players' skills to achieve high sports results. and successful presentation. At the heart of the thesis is the idea that the key role in the effectiveness of performance and the best possible performance of teams in sports is entrusted to the leader. The key role of the leader and his skills is among the main roles of great importance in sports, which must be constantly upgraded, enriched and improved through various innovative approaches and practices.

Overview of the main concepts, styles and typology in connection with the role and importance of the skills of team leaders for performance in sports - materials and methods

This presentation presents the theoretical basis on which the basic concepts, styles and typology of leadership rest in the context of the skills of sports leaders for the successful performance of their teams. The study examines leading postulates and definitions of leadership with a focus on the importance of leadership skills in sport, through analysis by various authors and researchers on the subject. It explores different points of view on the issue while at the same

time refracting this basic base through the prism of sports leadership for the successful performance of teams.

In this regard, it can be said that for the selection of information here (books, magazines, articles, online portals, documents, reports, etc.) a set of selection criteria is applied, such as: relevant field of study, similar issues, theoretical models, concepts and findings in the field of leadership in sports, the successful application of the role of the leader for high sports achievements of the teams, the importance of leadership achievements in achieving the goals of the teams as a whole. In summary, the present study uses methods of analysis such as: theoretical and scientific analysis; empirical analysis (author's observations and analyzes); comparative analysis (method of comparing different theoretical statements and the results of the research); systematic analysis (analysis of observations by collecting and summarizing data); secondary data analysis (review, analysis and formation of conclusions based on available publications on the topic).

Key concepts of leadership in the focus of good performance of teams in sports

There are many theories that define leadership as a concept. They develop and enrich over the years, exploring different leadership countries and behaviors. Trait theory is among those best known and explains the concept by referring to the leadership qualities that people possess, incl. and in sports. Its proven limitations and its emphasis on the nature of the types of behavior in leadership, rather than on the personality of the leader, contribute to the next steps in the development of leadership theory. This is the recognition by researchers that what leaders do and how they do it depends on the situation in which they find themselves (Fiedler, 1967:3). Thus, different leadership traits gradually acquire their importance, which requires the use of different behaviors (leadership styles) to achieve effectiveness in different situations. These studies also lead to theories of situational leadership. A little later, trait theory was revived in the notion of emotional intelligence as a necessary attribute of leaders, and then the idea of leadership as a holistic approach to leadership was put forward (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007:35).

Despite all the research and attempts at theorizing, the concept of leadership is still problematic, elusive, and enigmatic, making it difficult to define an understanding of leadership that offers both an intellectual and an emotional scope to the concept. The difficulty in defining leadership as a concept creates some problems also given the different types of situations in which different types of sports leaders operate in many different leadership styles. Creating a theory that encompasses all of these variables is difficult, if not impossible.

For these reasons, when presenting teams in sports, it is most appropriate for sports leaders to take advantage of the various leadership theories that exist and to explain the various aspects of leadership, as a combination of one or more postulates without reliance. completely only on one theory. Leadership (and what makes a sports leader good) can be most properly defined by considering how and what leaders do in relation to the different leadership styles they perceive.

In the context of the present study, leadership focuses on the skills of team leaders to represent them in sport. Given this, for the purposes of the article, we assume that the term "leader" defines the personality of the "team leader", who gives guidance to a group of people (teams) in the implementation of their tasks; guides them and encourages them to achieve higher sports results; evaluates their implementation, corrects their actions and presents a vision for their improvement; discusses and comments with his team on the results of their performance, giving them adequate and timely feedback; works together with the team motivating it to achieve the goals of the whole team and its performance. Just as a leader's team leadership skills are

essential to achieving good results, so are individual leadership support, motivation and feedback skills essential. A good sports leader must be able to approach each athlete on his team individually and in groups to the group as a whole.

The leadership style of the coach in the context of the performance of the teams in sports

Leadership style is the approach used in the exercise of leadership when they are connected to the athletes on their team. In a broad sense, the understanding of leadership style includes the integration of a specific set of elements of activity, determined by the abilities of the individual and influenced by the circumstances and environment in which the leader operates. In a narrow sense, the understanding of leadership style is seen as a set of methods, ways, means, techniques, management procedures or in other words comes down to a technology for effective leadership of a sports team. There are many leadership styles, and here, like leadership concepts and postulates, it cannot be said that one style is necessarily better than another in every situation. To one degree or another, sports leaders can be authoritarian or democratic, subordinate or developmental, task-oriented and sport-oriented, or player-oriented.

According to the criterion "attitude towards subordinates", we can describe the following leadership styles (Lewin et al., 1999:237):

Authoritarian, which is characterized by a tendency to centralize power and excessive control over events;

Democratic, in which the sports leader acts together with his team members;

Liberal, which stimulates the development of creative intellectuality, because it is characterized by minimal power of the leader and maximum freedom of athletes.

Later, other leadership styles were explored and identified, which can also be applied by sports leaders (Goleman, 2001:78):

- Compulsory - it requires strict compliance and is applied in crisis situations in teams and group and / or in resolving issues related to problematic athletes;
- Authoritative - this style mobilizes athletes and is used when a new vision and a new direction is needed;
- Affiliate - this style creates harmony and is used to overcome past events to motivate players or teams under stress;
- Democratic - this style reaches consensus and is applied to build agreements and gain mutual trust between the coach and the team;
- Stimulating - this style sets high standards and is used to get fast results from a highly motivated team;
- Coaching (training) - this style develops athletes and is used to improve the performance and development of team strengths.

Given the constant possibilities for creating unforeseen situations in a team, under no circumstances can it be assumed that each style is correct or that there is an ideal leadership style. It all depends on the factors influencing the degree to which a style is appropriate, the

type of team, the nature of the sport, the nature of the skills the coach requires, the characteristics, qualities and personality of the athletes in the group and the team as a whole and last but not least - from the personality of the sports leader.

Effective leaders are able to change their style to meet the needs of the current team situation. Democratic leaders can quickly become coercive when faced with a crisis in the team, but they have a clear idea of what they are doing and why. Bad leaders change their style at random, so the athletes on their team get confused and don't know what to expect next. Good leaders can also change their style when working with individual athletes according to their characteristics. Some players need more positive guidance. Others respond best if they participate in decision-making with their coach.

Of course, there must be a limit to the degree of flexibility that sports leaders use. Excessive differentiation between one or another athlete on the team (for example, to one constant and often unfounded criticism, and to another - motivation and support even in case of non-fulfillment of his duties), as well as the sharp inconsistency of the coach can be considered inappropriate and unreasonable. in his approach. This shows a personal attitude towards certain athletes on the team and individual preferences of the coach, which, other things being equal, can lead to a quick and secure breakup of the team.

Typology of leaders in the performance of teams in sports

In addition to the analysis of the different leadership styles, the classification of the types of leaders is also important, as this can lead to a much better understanding of the process and help to create a basis for programs to develop leadership in sport.

The authors comment that: "leadership is a widespread phenomenon and its functions are best performed by those who have the interest, knowledge, skills and motivation to make this performance effective" (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2007:720; Ozgun et al., 2017:85). It is possible that people who become managers do not always possess these qualities to the desired degree and this creates the need for systematic programs for leadership development. If we look more deeply at the different typologies of leaders, we find charismatic, visionary, transformational, transactional, authentic.

Charismatic leaders rely on their personality, inspirational qualities and "aura" to get people to follow them. The researcher who coined the term (1978) suggested that "charismatic leaders are separated from ordinary people and treated as endowed with exceptional powers or qualities that inspire followers" (Burns, 1978:44-45).

Visionaries focus on a clear vision for an exciting future and inspire their followers by successfully passing that vision on to them. Some scholars describe vision as "a target that attracts" (Bennis, 2010:4), while others argue that "one of the most important leadership practices is to give life and work meaning and purpose by offering an exciting vision" (Kouzes & Posner, 2003:112).

Transformation leaders are among the most preferred and most desired in sports (Cotterill & Franssen, 2016:123-124). They are able through the strength of their personality to make significant changes in the behavior of their athletes in order to achieve the vision or goals of the leader, resp. and those of the whole team. Transforming sports leadership involves motivating athletes to pursue higher goals, and good leadership presupposes moral responsibility - to respond to the values and needs of athletes in a way that is conducive to the highest form of

human relationships. In fact, the ultimate test of moral leadership is "its ability to transcend the claims of many everyday needs, desires, and expectations" (Burns, 1978:46).

Transactional leadership occurs when the coach takes the initiative to make contact with other people in order to exchange valuables - money, players, security (Burns, 1978:19), for example, in search of sponsors for the team. These sports leaders display "specific leadership skills, usually related to the ability to get results, to control through processes, to solve problems, to plan and organize" (Tavanti, 2008:169) within the structure and boundaries of the team.

Authentic leaders sincerely want to serve athletes through their leadership. They are more interested in empowering the players they train to change results than in power, money or prestige for themselves. They lead with purpose, meaning and values; build lasting relationships with athletes. Others follow them because they know where they stand (George, 2003:12). These leaders are extremely consistent and self-disciplined. These leaders act in accordance with their deep personal values and beliefs in order to build trust and gain the respect of their followers. They promote different points of view, build cooperative relationships with their players and lead in a way that the team perceives as authentic (Harter, 2002:382).

One of the most popular typologies of leaders in sports includes four types of leaders (Fransen et al., 2014:1392):

-The first is the task manager - he is responsible for the team and helps him focus on goals, while also contributing to tactical decisions. This leader gives teammates tactical advice during the game, encourages them and sets them up positively if necessary.

- The second type of leader is motivational - he is the biggest stimulus factor for the team and encourages the team constantly. This type of leader is among the most respected leaders because it directs all the passions and emotions of athletes to the field of action - not just in the right direction, but also in a way that the team presents itself as optimally and effectively as a team.

- The third type is the social leader - he has a key role not only in the field of action of the team but as a person who promotes good relations between athletes and takes care of a good atmosphere in the group - in terms of social environment (in the locker room, on field, in the social activities of the team, etc.). In addition, this leader helps deal with crisis and conflict situations between teammates; he is an extremely good listener and trusts his team unreservedly.

- The last type is the so-called "external leader" - he can be an additional key figure for the group outside the coach as a leader and to act as a link between the team and outside stakeholders. This type of leader can be a representative of the members of the sports club or its management at a higher level. For example, the external leader is the one who takes over the communication with the sponsors; he informs and informs the team about the management of the club; he gives instructions to the group in connection with various sports, club and social activities, etc.

Some of the sports leaders and coaches may show different characteristics of different types depending on the situations in which they find themselves. Despite the individual type characteristics, the leadership in the sport must be distributed, thus spreading among the players and the team, who work together in their common processes of influence and interdependence.

Findings and results of the study of the role and importance of team leaders' skills for performance in sport

The key role of the skills and competencies of team leaders for performance in sport

Main roles of the leader in sports

Leadership roles are characterized in the first place by the fact that leaders do things differently because they are different in themselves. The leader's task is to influence and inspire players who expect guidance and support from him. What separates true sports leaders from others is awareness and concern for the needs of others.

One of the most convincing analyzes regarding the basic roles of the leader, incl. and in sports, it is a series of three actions that include (Adair, 1973:3): (1) determining what the team must perform; (2) achieving the set goal; (3) maintaining effective team relationships.

What the team wants to receive from its leader is defined as areas of need that need to be met. They can be described as follows (Adair, 1973:3-4):

- Need for the fulfillment of the goal - the achievement of high results;
- Individual needs - the need to harmonize the needs of each player with the needs of the goal and the team;
- Team needs - the need to build, maintain and motivate team spirit.

All these needs are interconnected - the goals of the team, individual and team needs are interdependent. If the need to achieve the goal is met, it will satisfy individual and team needs. However, the need to achieve the goal cannot be met without the necessary attention to individual and team needs. On the other hand, if the individual needs are met, it brings satisfaction to the group needs, and vice versa. If a sports leader focuses too much on the players and meeting individual or team needs at the expense of the goal, it can be quite dangerous. Therefore, the best sports leaders are those who keep these three needs satisfied, in balance and harmony and in accordance with the requirements of the situation.

The leader in sports as his main motivating figure

Every leader in sports must always keep in mind that the needs of his players cannot be covered in a hierarchy, because everyone changes individually. It depends on the athlete's life, the environment that affects him, the school in which he studied, family habits, customs and traditions, training conditions and sports, his closest teammates. The needs are dynamic, they can be combined in different ways, to be arranged individually. There can be no one strategy that is valid for every player and through it everyone in the team can be motivated. Both leadership styles and motivational approaches and models should be seen as useful options for developing certain specific leadership strategies, because each player on the team must be motivated. It is essential to find this specific motive that stimulates him the most and this is the key to motivating players and the most important task of the leader in sports. Motivational factors are those influences of the social subject of the general environment, as well as the sports environment itself on the players, which determine their motivation in the sports and training process, their desire to achieve a goal. If we look conceptually, we find their differentiation into two groups (Paunov, 2001:59-61):

- General motivating factors - here the influences of the general environment on the players are taken into account;
- Immediate motivating factors - here the influences of the leader and the club as a whole on the players are taken into account.

The general motivating factors can include: the level of needs, the state and development of the specific sport, the state and development of the money market.

Since in the context of the considered question for the leader as the main motivating figure in sports, the second group of factors (immediate) is more important, they can be referred to:

- The level and dynamics of the remuneration of athletes is considered one of the main motivating factors. In this way, the sports leader motivates to achieve the goals of the team and the club by encouraging and stimulating through monetary rewards and other benefits.
- Recognition of achievements is also a key motivating factor for leaders in sports, as it is associated not only with opportunities to provide higher remuneration, but also much greater responsibility in the sports process, development, improving team performance and achieving the goals.
- Presenting specific and higher requirements to the team - the full realization of the capabilities of this factor requires the sports leader to combine it with the encouragement of those who meet higher requirements in their performance and with the sanctioning (in a certain way) of those who do not meet the accepted standards. This is one of the motivational approaches through which a sports leader can strengthen the sense of justice in the team.
- Providing an opportunity for development and application of knowledge and skills of players is a motivating factor related to meeting their material and spiritual needs, as well as meeting their needs for prestige, self-esteem and self-expression.
- The granting of power. The expansion of influence is a motivating factor related to the needs of players to recognize their achievements, self-esteem, prestige and self-expression, the full realization of their athletic abilities.
- The expansion of the team form of work functions as a motivating factor primarily in connection with meeting the personal needs of the players in the team (respect from teammates, belonging, commitment, etc.).
- The socio-psychological climate can be considered as a complex motivating factor. In general, the normal climate, the absence of sharp conflicts in a team, caused by acute forms of sports "malice" and competition, improper management methods or interpersonal inconsistencies, favor formal and informal communication between the sports leader and his team and between the team and other groups of people in the club. The thesis has been proven that the good psychological climate motivates the higher sports activity of the players, and hence for a much better performance in general.

Motivation is among the main techniques used by leaders, incl. and for more effective implementation and achievement of team goals. The practical realization of motivation in the sports and training process implies a choice of techniques, methods, approaches that best reflect any problems that may arise. In addition, each leader must take into account the factors

influencing the motivational process (organizational structure of the club, team climate, requirements for players, etc.).

In summary, it can be added that an important prerequisite for increasing the motivation of the team by the leader is the creation of conditions in which each player feels significant. This can be achieved in many ways: through the leader's attention to the needs of the athletes that lead to motivation; by emphasizing challenges, responsibilities, development; through the urge for success and empathy; by individually distinguishing each of the teams in the process; by influencing players' expectations; through their training in order to improve their sports skills and qualities; through satisfaction with the sport as a whole and their adequate remuneration.

Maintaining an ongoing dialogue between the group and the leader can help each party to understand the other party's position on all issues related to the implementation of the team's goals. In this way, the optimal result can be achieved not only for the team, but also for the sports club as a whole.

Skills and competencies of the leader for higher team efficiency and achieving high sports results

There are many factors that can contribute to the potential success of the leader in terms of his qualities and competencies, incl. and during its training and development. Among the qualities that good leaders have are (Tamkin et al., 2010:12-13):

- A holistic view of things as a whole without being divided into constituent parts;
- Connecting the parts through a guiding sense of purpose;
- Strong motivation to achieve high results, focused on the goals, vision and mission of the team;
- Awareness that the leaders in sports cannot perform the overall performance of the tasks on their own, but are conductors for this performance through their influence on the players in the team;
- Attentive look and exceptional consistency for high sports achievements through your interactions with the team and their embodiment in the role of the leader.

If we have to summarize, it can be said that a leader in sports must have the following distinctive qualities: character; charisma; devotion; communication; competence; courage; foresight; focus; generosity; initiative; listening; passion; positive attitude; ability to solve problems; relationships; responsibility; confidence; self-discipline; ability to serve the team; ability to learn; vision.

Although theories and concepts of leadership have their limitations, they are of considerable value in the study of the qualities required of good leaders in sport. One of the main qualities that a sports leader needs is the ability to analyze and "read" situations and to establish order and clarity in those that can be considered unclear. Leadership requires "a sense of purpose and ability to influence others, to interpret situations, to negotiate, and to express personal views, often in the face of opposition" (Gold et al., 2010:6).

Conclusions

At the end of the study it can be summarized that in modern sports leadership serves to reveal the existing opportunities to improve the work of teams and achieve much higher results. In this way, an opinion is formed about how and how successfully or unsuccessfully the athletes are doing. In addition, leadership in sport has the opportunity to bring to the fore those players who can be given greater responsibilities, incl. and for career development. For this reason, it is in the interest of every sports club to have good and competent leaders. Leadership in sports gives an insight into the extent to which the professional knowledge, skills and training of the players are adequate to the requirements of the team. Along with this, the key role of the leader in sports as one of the most important participants in the process is extremely important for achieving these goals. As a motivator and in the competencies of many personal characteristics, he is a kind of buffer between the team and achieving the goals of the team. His role is central in the whole process of preparing and presenting the team, while at the same time he properly manages this process and its effectiveness.

The results and analyzes of this study reveal a clear picture in which the leader, his role and leadership skills, as well as team leadership have a unique influence on the achievement of team goals. His findings show that not only adaptability as a quality of a sports leader, but also the need for effective methods and approaches for the development of players' skills to achieve high sports results are of particular importance. Of course, this is based on the key role of leadership skills in performance and the best possible performance of teams in sport. The research proves that the main role of the leader and his skills are among the most important roles of exceptional importance in sports, which must be constantly upgraded, enriched and improved through various innovative approaches and practices.

The issue of leadership in sport is not limited to this framework. Future research on the topic can be focused on specific programs and innovative methods of improving these skills and competencies of a sports leader, on real research on how these models are tested and reflected in different sports, in assessing their effectiveness in achieving high sports results and achievements.

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