

Review

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PRESERVING THE HEALTH OF ATHLETES - A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF THE SPORTS AND BUSINESS FUNCTIONS OF SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: The division of functional resources in sports, into human and physical, indicates that the existence of adequate sports facilities, equipment and props or sports equipment, and appropriate personnel in the management and professional structure of sports organizations does not guarantee the achievement of set goals, expressed primarily through sports results, which are performed by well-prepared and healthy athletes. By considering the two basic segments of management in sports organizations, sports and business, it can be noticed that, in addition to achieving the maximum sports performance of athletes, the goal of the complete system is to preserve their health. In this context, the subsystems of the sports function: selection, medical examinations, adequately planned and implemented training, competitions and recovery, and specific aspects of the business function, through management and marketing processes, related overall business logistics, as components of a unique system aimed at realizing a common strategic goal, they help preserve the health of athletes.

Keywords: Sport, health, management in sport, theory of sport

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Introduction

In modern sports, expectations from athletes are higher than ever, and this happens in complex circumstances. This, first of all, considering that equalizing and surpassing existing sports results requires exceptional commitment, organization and possession of numerous appropriate resources, as well as the overall environment (economic, political, demographic, ecological, ...) in which sports are realized. Therefore, during the continuous and very intense struggle for exceptional sports achievements, it is necessary to take care of the performers of sports results – athletes, primarily their health.

It is obvious that the definitions of both sports and health have evolved in the previous period. The above is visible through the following two definitions of sport. "Any type of physical exercise or activity that aims at an action, the execution of which is essentially based on the idea of fighting against a certain element: distance, time, obstacles, material difficulties, dangers, animals, opponents and, in addition, oneself" (G. Herbert, in Kurelić 1967). "Sports are all forms of physical activity that, through unorganized or organized participation, aim to express or improve physical fitness and mental well-being, create social relationships or achieve results in competitions of all levels." (European Sports Charter). Due to the characteristics of the modern way of life, the concept of quality of life is very important and often in circulation.

During the development and implementation of sports, significant changes are observed in the available resources, primarily technology. These changes can be seen, both in the segment of training technology (training and recovery), as well as in magnificent sports facilities that enable athletes to achieve top results. Appropriate organization is also progressively present, which is necessary for the successful implementation of activities in three key segments of sports management: management of sports organizations (Tošić, 2023), management of sports facilities and management of sports events (Dašić, 2023). However, the importance of human resources is still exceptional. Bearing in mind that sports activities are carried out within sports organizations, their organizational design represents a significant segment in the building of sports success. The basic division of the management function in a sports organization, into sports and business, indicates two sides of the same coin. Namely, realizing those functions, with their numerous specific subsystems, complete and synchronized progress of the sports organization as well as its members, i.e. unity in achieving its goals, vision and mission, is carried out.

Given that sport is a very complex and dynamic system, it is necessary to refer back to that concept as well. A system is most often defined as a set of mutually connected and conditioned components (subsystems), which by their common determinant form a harmonious whole. Also, a system is a formal scheme by means of which some ele-

ments or phenomena are arranged, interconnected and conditioned in order to achieve some goal.

Why is it still important to consider sport as a system, that is, as a functional unit?

1. Because in sports it is necessary to predict, set goals, and achieve results.
2. Because a well-placed system makes it possible to achieve results.
3. Because a well-placed system can also improve its components.

Also, a well-placed system can, through the synergistic action of its sub-systems, preserve key set values, such as the health of athletes.

The sports system in the Republic is primarily regulated by the Law on Sports, which states: "Practicing sports has to be humane, free and voluntary, healthy and safe, in accordance with the natural and social environment, fair, tolerant, ethically acceptable, responsible, independent from misuse and objectives contrary to sports spirit and available to all citizens under equal conditions, regardless of age, level of physical ability, degree of possible disability, sex and other personal attributes."

A sports organization, according to the Law on Sports (Article 3, point 6): "is an organization established for the purpose of carrying out sports activities, in accordance with this law." Article 33 of the same law stipulates that in order to perform sports activities and activities, a sports organization can be established as an association or as a business company.

Resources in sports

Successful implementation of planned activities, especially sports, requires adequate preparation. A significant segment or part of the necessary prerequisites for the successful implementation of the activity involves the timely provision of appropriate resources.

Explaining resources (Karavidić, Čukanović-Karavidić, 2016) indicate: "Organizational assets that include financial, physical, human, intangible and structural cultural resources." The above indicates a wide range of "origins" of resources, that is, "sources" from which they are taken. Resource (fr. ressource) aid, source of help; the source (economy) from which the raw materials are obtained; place of entertainment; close society. (Vujaklija, 2004).

Resources in sport mean everything that ensures, or limits, the realization of processes and the achievement of goals in the sport system and its subsystems. Resources in sport are classified into two basic categories: functional and logistical (supporting)

resources. Functional resources, which are a prerequisite for the successful implementation of processes in sports (training and competition), are divided into human potential and physical resources. Logistical (supporting) resources include monetary resources and data as a resource (Nešić, 2006). Given that resources exhibit certain general characteristics: consumption, renewal and productivity, the same author indicates that resource renewal is: "one of the important activities of management in sports organizations." Also: "Resource renewal in sports organizations can be realized by applying two types of rates:

- Positive, when the management of the organization fills the resource base in a timely manner, either individually or with sets of resources, and
- Negative, when there is no timely action to restore resources, or it is neglected, and the resource base of the sports organization begins to fall, that is, to reduce its functionality."

Pointing out that human resources represent the "essential" resource of sport, (Mašić, Begović, 2022) emphasize that "it is necessary to continuously assess possible risks and timely forecast and take the necessary measures and procedures in order to prevent unwanted events, i.e. to preserve resources in sport."

Conservation of resources is extremely important for several reasons. On the one hand, for the purpose of enabling the required conditions for the realization of sport and preserving its quality. However, considering that the basic resource of sport is people, it is necessary to take all necessary measures and procedures in order to avoid damage to their health and safety. It is necessary to point out that sports facilities, due to their size, price, as well as the expected duration, represent strategic resources of sports, and as such it is necessary to maintain them. Also, only functional and reliable sports facilities contribute to preserving the health and physical integrity of athletes.

Athletes' health

The question of health was also important in ancient civilizations: China, India, and Ancient Greece. Adequate nutrition, physical activity and hygiene are most often mentioned as prerequisites for health. Today, the main trigger for the manifestation of the disease is stress (Franjić, 2023). As new and generally more comprehensive definitions of sport have emerged over time, definitions of health have also changed (Miletić, et al., 2023).

Today, the most common definition of the World Health Organization is: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not just the absence of disease and infirmity." Also, there are several aspects of health such as:

- Physical health – reflects the mechanical functioning of the body.

- Mental health – reflects the ability to think clearly and coherently.
- Emotional health – enables one to recognize and adequately express emotions (joy, anger, enjoyment), which implies adequate response to stress.
- Social health – indicates the ability to establish and maintain social contacts with people.
- Community health – which highlights the inseparable link between individual health and everything that surrounds us.

In the structure of the theory of sport (Mašić, 2006), performers form the first segment, and include athletes, sports judges, coaches, managers and the audience. Also in the division of resources in sports (Nešić, 2006), the first segment – functional resources consists of human potential and physical resources. Bearing in mind that athletes are the direct creators of a specific sports result, the above indicates that it is necessary to continuously take care of the health of athletes. In this sense, it is advisable to point out the functional abilities of athletes, which mostly mean the capabilities of individual organs and organ systems that enable the conditions for the effective implementation of certain sports activities. In sports practice, functional abilities generally mean the capabilities of organ systems (respiratory, cardiovascular and nervous), which indicates that only a healthy body of an athlete, i.e. an athlete as a complete person with all his/her characteristics and abilities, can successfully participate both in training and in competitions, and endure extremely high efforts and achieve the set tasks and achieve the desired results.

In the work Legal Procedures for the Application of Diagnostics in Sports (Đukanović, Mašić, Kostovski, 2019) they indicate that the health care of athletes and persons engaged in physical activity represents a very important segment of the health care of a nation, and more broadly of the entire specific sports-active segment of the human population. In order to preserve the health of athletes, the Law on Sports (Article 22) prohibits the exposure of the athlete to the sports activities that may jeopardise or aggravate his/her health condition, and the use of doping is also prohibited.

Health is an extremely important issue for every individual, as well as his/her relatives. The health of the athlete is of first-class importance for the athlete himself, but also for his/her environment – club, national team, fans (Mihic, et al., 2023). Therefore, there are numerous "checks" on the health of athletes. This starts with a medical examination to determine the health capacity to start playing sports, through regular – periodic examinations of athletes to determine the ability to compete, and up to the necessary medical examination when an athlete transfers to another sports organization.

It is important to mention that physical injuries are also an important health issue, especially in challenging, dynamic and risky activities such as sports. On the nature of sports injuries (Apostolovski, et al. chief editor Banović, 1993) point out the following: "Sports

injuries are by far the largest number of light physical injuries, but they are specific in terms of their impact on competitive ability." Those injuries are either acute, i.e. they manifest immediately with certain symptoms, or they are chronic, i.e. aggravation of symptomatology results after long-term, repeated straining of certain tissue structures".

Regarding the types of injuries (the same source) come to a decision that, regardless of severity, they can be divided into endogenous and exogenous in sports. "Endogenous injuries represent anatomical and physiological changes in tissue structures, primarily due to fatigue or overexertion. Exogenous injuries are caused by external forces or agents. These injuries are more common in sports and by nature can be more severe because they are caused by much stronger insults, whether it is direct or indirect mechanical effects, thermal damage and chemical agents. Therefore, these are insults that affect the athlete outside of his body. By their nature, injuries are forcefully caused by interruptions in the continuity or changes in the structure of a body surface, internal or external (H.R.R. Robertson)".

Unfortunately, injuries occur in people of different ages, depending on numerous factors, and are especially dangerous in those in their third age, who may undergo obvious changes in structure and abilities, such as: sarcopenia (loss of muscle mass), dynapenia (loss of explosive strength), osteopenia (decrease in bone density), or osteoporosis (loss of bone mass), which athletes can prevent to a certain extent during training.

Functions of management in sports organizations

One of the characteristics of today's sports is management in sports, which enables the successful functioning of the entire sports system, but also of each sports organization as a separate entity. Giving an example of an individual sports organization (Kastratović, 2004) precisely defines management in sports "as a set of activities of members of a sports organization who, with their knowledge, skills and abilities, contribute to the achievement of predetermined goals and the realization of the tasks that arise from them."

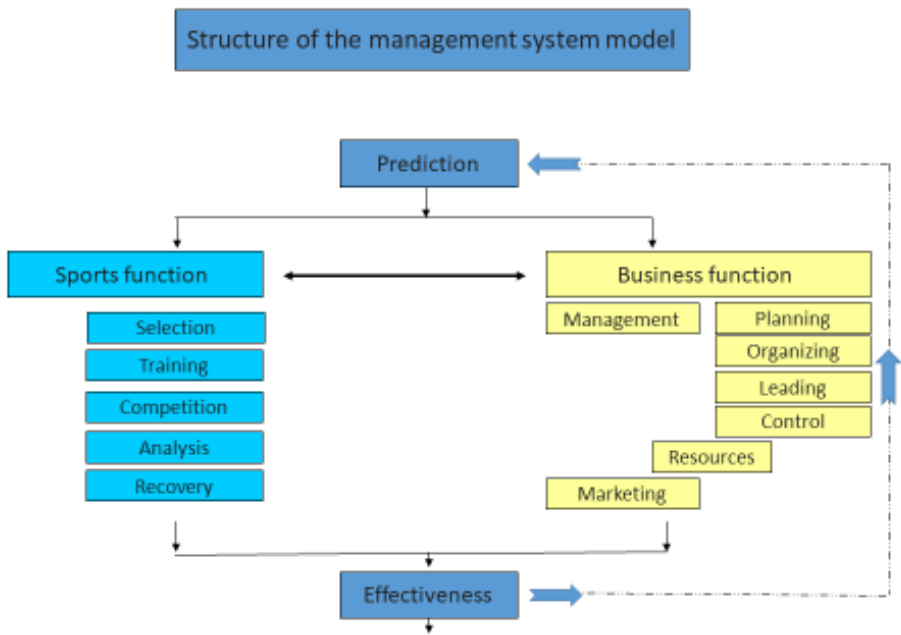
Considering the definition of management in sports, according to which it is: "the process of forecasting, planning, organizing, leading and controlling all resources of a sports organization, both human, material, financial and organizational, in order to achieve certain goals" (Novaković, S., Ilić, R. 2019), it is evident that it is a complex mechanism, and that human resources have a primary place in it.

Every sports organization has several subsystems, and the two basic management functions in a sports organization are sports and business one. Each of the above management functions has its own subsystems. Thus, within the sports function, at least the following subsystems can be listed: selection, training, competition, analysis, recovery.

In the business function, significant subsystems are: management, which includes planning, organizing, leading and controlling, as well as resource management and marketing. The number of subsystems, i.e. activities in the two basic functions of management in a sports organization is practically unlimited. This is because each of them can refer to several different specific activities. For example, a competition implies participation in a certain league, and also in a cup competition, and both are supported by a whole set of managerial and marketing activities.

The two basic management functions in a sports organization, with specific subsystems, are presented in the following diagram.

Diagram 1. Structures of the sports organization management system model



In the scheme of the structure of the sports organization management system model, the starting point is forecasting, then the activities are implemented through the sports and business function, i.e. their subsystems, and then the effectiveness of all previously carried out sub-processes or activities of the organization is determined. Depending on the degree of realization of the set tasks of the mentioned functions and their subsystems, i.e. the effectiveness of actions, it is decided on the need to take corrective measures and actions in the next cycle.

By looking at the presented sports organization management model, the basic cybernetic principle of self-regulation in production can be observed, which says: the input

asks the output what should be changed in the process in order to obtain the desired output quality. The stated principle applies to each of the sub-processes or activities (Dašić, et al., 2023).

A prerequisite for progress and achieving results in any activity, even in sports, are clearly set goals. The term strategy is taken from military terminology, and indicates the most important goals that the organization strives to achieve over a longer period of time. A clearly defined direction of development enables the sports organization, i.e. its members, to engage with enthusiasm and self-confidence in the implementation of tactical and operational tasks that enable the realization of strategic decisions. Strategic decisions relate to the long-term functioning of a sports organization, and determine the ways and directions of its development, and are implemented through all subsystems of a sports organization.

The strategic goal of every sports organization, regardless of whether it is a collective or individual sport, is to achieve significant progress in the long term, which can be reflected, for example, in: moving to a higher level of competition and achieving a stable position at that level, improving the material base (primarily refers to sports facilities with systems, devices and props), ensuring a continuously good team or individual athletes – if it is an individual sport. In order for the above to be successful, it is necessary to preserve, improve, as well as timely supplement and upgrade the segment that directly creates sports results, namely the athletes. At first glance, the above is realized through the sports function through adequate selection, training process... but also through the adequate functioning of all sub-processes of the business function. Namely, all of the above aims to provide the best possible conditions for quality selection, training, competition, recovery, i.e. general and specific living and working conditions of athletes, which have a favourable effect on the preservation of their health.

Recognizable sports organizations, which are a brand in their sport, have significant interest, i.e. influx for their youngest, as well as other selections. Such organizations are also able to hire the best coaches and other necessary sports experts, as well as experts in sports, and therefore provide their athletes with the best conditions for sports training and performance. In such sports organizations, i.e. in such a work system, athletes are as much as possible, and more than elsewhere, protected from numerous risk factors.

Conclusion

Modern sport, as a very complex and dynamic system, implements management in sports for the purpose of effective functioning, and due to the achievement of top sporting and other results, it requires an exceptional level of ability and knowledge from all participants. The functioning of sports is unthinkable without the engagement of sig-

nificant resources, among which authors from the field of sports management refer to human resources. And in the structure of sports theory, sports performers are the first segment, and among them athletes are the direct creators of sports results.

In the sports system, sports organizations represent the central place where athletes are "built", that is, they represent the "production plant", and in their work, the basic functions of management are the sports and business functions, with their numerous subsystems. Every sports organization has its own vision, mission and goals, among which the most important are long-term goals (which refer to a period of ten years or more), which we call strategic.

Health, as an extremely important life issue, is considered to be the basis in sports, one could say the springboard for the creation of top sporting achievements. Therefore, both in life and in sports, it is necessary to pay proper attention to it and act in terms of its preservation.

It is known that resources are used up during the production process, which also happens during the process in sports, which includes training and competitions. Therefore, maintenance as well as replacement of resources is necessary. Bearing in mind that human resources are crucial in sports, the state, through laws and by-laws, enables and requires the preservation of athletes' health. In this context, sports organizations, through two basic management functions – sports and business, using their own numerous subsystems, create a favourable background for the successful realization of set goals in the long term. One of the long-term strategic goals of sports organizations is to preserve the health of athletes.

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