

EDITORIAL

Where is Romanian University Sports? Unde este sportul universitar din România?

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Formed by the known levels of school and university physical education activities, physical activities for all, and high performance sport, the field of generically termed *sport* in Romania is based on a vast legislation. This legislation is intended to support from several points of view the practitioners of sports activities at all mentioned levels, in order to promote health and high performance sport. Because all the Romanian population attends the general compulsory education level represented by middle school education, we consider that the causes of the poor development rate of Romanian sports should be looked for at this level.

The most obvious manifestation of the low performance level is found precisely in high performance sport. In school education, within the network of the Ministry of National Education, there are two state sports organizations that deal with the initiation and training of high performance athletes: *school sports clubs* and *sports high schools*. These are paralleled at extra-school level by sports associations and clubs of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) network, as well as other sports units organized autonomously based on the association right. The annual production of high performance school units, which stops at the age of 18, is quite important but of questionable quality. In some sport branches, these sports units make their presence felt, in the sense of the presence of Romania in the top European junior rankings, with some relatively good results obtained in several sports.

However, with the transition from junior to senior level, a breach occurs. The representation of Romanian athletes of the 18-25 year age group, corresponding to the university education level, in Europe and worldwide decreases to almost zero, as high performance sport after the age of 18 continues almost exclusively in the clubs of the parallel MYS network. Except for sports faculties that concentrate the majority of high performance athletes coming from school sports clubs and sports high schools, the presence of these athletes in other faculties/universities is very low. Even if athletes enter higher education, they are lost to sport because of the lack of interest of the management boards of these universities. This is why we

consider that there are certain deficiencies in the higher education system. The mentality according to which a university's participation in sport competitions would improve the image of that university, in conformity with the saying: "I participate - I exist, I do not participate - I do not exist", is absent from universities. There is no constant concern in universities for attracting elite athletes to the university representative teams. Such policies, typical of the great and small Western universities, are not adopted by Romanian universities. Also, in non-sports universities there are no special accommodation spaces and advantages for high performance athletes. It would also be useful for university sports activity to give up the outdated mentality of some university management boards or teaching staff regarding the request of elite athletes to be allowed to take current tests on other dates than scheduled, depending on the competition calendar, to have open exam sessions or be excused for absence in the case of participation in competitions/training camps, although all these situations are regulated by the Law of physical education and sport. Instead, implacable answers are given such as: "We don't know this law", "This is a place for education, not sport", etc. In order to encourage high performance sport in universities, it is necessary to promote a new mentality of the university management boards, with a view to attracting high performance athlete-students to the university representative teams. It should not be overlooked that the age of higher education ranges between 18-25 years, which is the optimal age for obtaining maximum sports performance. Some of the world champions or medal winners who participated in the 2013 World Athletics Championships (10-18 August) are students or graduates of Western universities.

Other weaknesses of high performance sport are related to the initial selection process and to the overemphasis within the training program on tactical training, to the detriment of technical and physical training. This is an old and general Romanian deficiency deriving from the wish to defeat the opponent from a numerically or physically inferior position. Instead of placing emphasis on intense

technical and physical training, which might lead to sure results but in a longer time period, winning in a sports competition is predominantly attempted through tactical procedures, that is winning in a competition is attempted by deceiving the opponent or by taking advantage from special weather conditions or from the opponent's errors, which leads to haphazard results. We mentioned in a previous editorial the importance of technical training as part of physical education classes. There is an optimal time period for learning sports technique; this overlaps the middle school education period. If this time period (11-16 years) is not used for the correct acquisition of the technique of some movements, sports or events, a handicap will be created through the formation of a deficient execution style. We mention that during this time period, the athlete's motivation should by no means be oriented towards winning national titles or records, but only towards the beauty and pleasure of competing, as well as the appreciation of personal progress.

Another weakness is the impatience of federations and coaches to obtain performance and champion titles based on their option to permanently decrease the age of selection and initiation, during the period of preschool education

that is also compulsory, for the majority of sports.

The training of athletes until the age of 18 only in school sports clubs and sports high schools, or even in other clubs of the MYS network or private clubs is not sufficient under the current selection and training conditions. The application of long lasting measures is required in order to consolidate the system's base and reveal, until the age of 16, all existing talents: a) raising the scientific level of initial selection and subsequent training, through the application by the interested specialized units of studied and tested methodologies; b) extending the domain to the entire middle school education system, by creating local computerized databases; c) reforming the middle school education system by the gradual introduction of former elite athletes in different sports as physical education teachers, who will provide the high-level technical training of middle school children.

This editorial is based on the conclusions of the author's personal research performed in the topic area related to sport selection and on his experience as a former athlete and professor in the field of school and university sport.