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PREFERENCES AND LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL ACTIONS AND IN TYPE OF OFFENSE AND DEFENSE UTILIZED IN COMPETITION BY YOUTH BASKETBALL PLAYERS

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KEY WORDS: basketball, youth, preferences, satisfaction.

ABSTRACT: The purposes of the present study are: a) to assess which technical and tactical actions of the game youth basketball players like to do in competition at different learning stages, b) to find out how much they like to play offense and defense, c) to assess the type of offense and defense that they prefer to execute, and d) to record the basic tactical team resources (BTTR) that are most requested by the youth player at different learning stages. The sample was composed of 989 youth basketball players who participate in the Spanish Basketball Federation leagues (60.1% from mini-basketball and 39.9% from the under-14 category). The results indicate that in competition: a) the action that players most like to execute is the shot, b) players prefer to be on offense than defense, c) the defensive game system that players most enjoy is man-on-man defense, d) players prefer pre-established offensive systems as opposed to open systems, and e) basic tactical team resources players most enjoy are give-and-go, clear-outs, and penetrate and dish. These data may serve as a reference when doing short-, medium-, and long-term planning. In any case, it is necessary for coaches to combine the preferences of the players with the actual needs of each learning stage.

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Introduction

The new methodological tendencies in the learning and teaching processes revolve around the needs, priorities, and progression of the student. They are based on cognitive teaching styles that try to create learning and teaching situations in which the youth players understand why to utilize a certain game action, creating an active, understanding, and intelligent involvement of the players (Bund, 2008; Mitchell, Oslin & Griffin, 2006). Among the primary aspects of these new teaching and learning processes, the active participation of the players in their own learning process is sought (Mitchell, Oslin & Griffin, 2006), which is to say that coaches should set certain objectives to fulfill as well as content to work on from the youth players' priorities and preferences as well as from their progression (Balaguer, Castillo & Duda, 2008; Ortega, Giménez & Olmedilla, 2008).

Fulfilling the priorities and preferences of the youth players is determinant for obtaining an increase in satisfaction, which results in an increase in adherence to the activity (Vecina, Chacon, & Suerio, 2009), which in this case is the sport of basketball. The purposes of the present study were: a) to assess which technical and tactical actions of the game youth basketball players like to do in competition at different learning stages, b) find out how much they like to play offense and defense, c) to assess the type of offense and defense that they prefer to execute, and d) to record the basic tactical team resource that is most requested by the youth payer at different learning stages.

Method

The sample was composed of 989 youth basketball players who participate in the Spanish Basketball Federation leagues (60.1% from mini-basketball and 39.9% from the under-14 category). The "Cuestionario de Satisfacción y Preferencias en Jugadores de Baloncesto" [Questionnaire about Satisfaction and Preferences among Basketball Players] questionnaire, designed and validated by Ortega et al., (2008) was utilized. The chi-square test, student t-test for independent samples, and the student t-test for paired samples were all used. Significance was set at $p<0.05$ for all tests.

Results

The data from table 1 indicate statistically significant relationships between the individual technical and tactical actions that are preferred by the athletes and the age category ($\chi 2$ (5,N=978) = 29.091, p <.001), such that for mini-basketball players (10-11 years-old), in addition to shooting, they prefer defending and dribbling. Likewise, statistically significant relationships between defensive game systems and age category ($\chi 2$ (3,N=359) = 26.826, p <.001) were found, such that mini-basketball players prefer man-to-man defense while under-14 players (12-13 years-old) prefer zone defense. In both categories, preferences for pre-established offensive game systems are found.

In table 2, the degree of satisfaction in the game phases and BTTR are registered.

In table 2, it is demonstrated that both mini-basketball players (t590=9.681, p<.001) and under-14 players (t315=8.884, p<.001) as well as the total sample (t906=13.088, p<.001) prefer playing offense to defense, and this was statistically significant. However, the mini-basketball

players presented statistically higher values both for offense (t907=2.344, p<.05) and defense (t905=3.915, p<.001). With regard to the BTTR, both the mini-basketball and under-14 players prefer penetrate and dish, clear-outs, and give-and-go, and there are statistically significant differences between all these BTTR both with ball and away screens (p<.001).

Variable	Category	Mini-basketball	Under-14	Total	p-value
Individual technical or tactical action	Shoot	41.1%	55.8%	46.9%	.001
	Dribble	12.6%	6.7%	10.2%	
	Rebound	13.9%	14.7%	14.2%	
	Pass	10.7%	10.0%	10.4%	
	Defend	20.2%	12.1%	17.0%	
	Other	1.5%	.8%	1.2%	
	Man-to-man	38.9%	20.7%	29.5%	
Defensive game system	Man-to-man pressure	32.0%	23.9%	27.9%	.001
	Zone	13.7%	27.7%	20.9%	
	Zone pressure	15.4%	27.7%	21.7%	
Offensive game system	Pre-established	57.7%	51.1%	54.3%	.208
	Open	42.3%	48.9%	45.7%	

Table 1.- Preferences of individual technical and tactical actions and offensive and defensive game systems

Variable	Mini-basketball		Under-14		Total		p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
How much do you like being on offense?	9.14	1.18	8.94	7.45	9.07	1.21	<.01
How much do you like playing defense?	8.32	1.75	7.83	1.89	8.15	1.81	<.001
How much do you like receiving ball screens?	7.06	3.07	7.22	2.02	7.14	2.58	.558
How much do you like receiving away screens?	6.37	2.85	6.90	2.12	6.64	2.51	<.05
How much do you like performing ball screens?	6.86	2.48	6.45	2.35	6.65	2.42	.107
How much do you like performing away screens?	6.41	2.52	6.24	2.18	6.32	2.35	.502
How much do you like running a clear-out?	7.67	2.40	7.58	6.43	7.63	4.89	.858
How much do you like defending against a clear-out?	7.67	2.61	7.89	2.18	7.78	2.40	.391
How much do you like to do a give-and-go?	7.68	1.97	7.32	2.13	7.50	2.06	.098
How much do you like to do a penetrate and dish?	8.49	1.74	8.48	1.82	8.48	1.78	.991

Table 2.- Satisfaction (0=none, 10=total) in game phases and in BTTR

Discussion

The data from the present study show that in the mini-basketball and under-14 categories, the players indicate that the shot is the action that they most like to execute in a game, which is very similar to the data registered by Palao, Ortega, and Olmedilla (2007). These data reaffirm the different theoretical proposals of many authors that indicate that the shot is the most important game action as well as the action that provides the greatest motivation and satisfaction to youth players (American Sport Education Program [ASEP], 2001; Ortega, et al., 2007). From the present study, it should be highlighted that the action of defending is the second most-chosen option, something that is not defended much in the new theoretical proposals of teaching and learning styles for team sports.

Specifically, in the mini-basketball category, for one of every five kids, defending is what he or she most likes to do when competing (20.9% less than those who prefer to shoot). This tendency is maintained for under-14 players, though there is a much bigger difference between preference for shooting and defending (43.7%). This high percentage of preference for defense may be influenced by the opinions, preferences, and suggestions of the coaches, who in many cases tend to reward defensive actions more so than offensive actions. This tendency to answer what the coach suggests, and not what the player truly prefers can be due to the fact that in these age categories, the coach is perceived as a leader (Ruiz, 2007), though as they get older and continue to develop, players tend to respond from a less conditioned viewpoint. Regardless, it would be necessary to record the opinion that the players have about what their coaches request of them to know whether it acts as a contaminating variable.

The data from the present study also indicate that the payers present greater levels of satisfaction in the offensive game phase when compared to the defensive game phase, both in mini-basketball and under-14 payers, and similar values were registered by Palao, Ortega, and Olmedilla (2007). These data are in line with the constructivist methodological proposals in which the majority of authors consider it necessary to dedicate more time to offensive tasks as opposed to defensive tasks for two reasons: because it is what players enjoy and what motivates them (ASEP, 2001), and b) because the acquisition of offensive skills in basketball requires more practice time (Gutman & Finnegan, 2003).

With regard to defense, mini-basketball players prefer man-to-man defense, although a very high percentage of players prefer some type of zone defense (29.1%). This data is very interesting, since in many of the regional federations, zone defenses are prohibited by the rules, despite the fact that some teams still try to conceal their use. For under-14 players, the defense that is most preferred is the zone (55.4%), which is interesting since it is also prohibited in some regional federations, though less so than in mini-basketball. These preferences of the players go against different theoretical proposals about the suitable type of defense to use in educational stages, since the majority of authors support the use of man-to-man defense due to its richness in motor and cognitive learning (ASEP, 2001; Miniscalco & Kot, 2009).

Likewise, when analyzing the type of offense that the players most request, the most common answer was the pre-established offense (pre-determined play) in which the players have very specific functions,

decreasing in large part the creativity and wide variety of experiences that are so important according to the new tendencies in the processes of teaching and learning (Miniscalco & Kot, 2009; Piñar, et al., 2007).

Both the type of defense and the type of offense that were most requested may be influenced by different factors, though mostly it is the influence of the coach that specifically affects the player. It is possible that with the goal of achieving a certain result as opposed to fostering the learning process, coaches prefer pre-established offensive systems and zone defense, game systems that are more efficacious in the short-term but less suitable for achieving an adequate educational process (ASEP, 2001; Krause, Meyer & Meyer, 2008; Miniscalco, & Kot, 2009).

Finally, when analyzing the BTTR that are preferred by the youth players, it should be pointed out that in both categories the players preferred BTTR that were simpler (penetrate and dish, clear-outs, and give-and-go) as opposed to more complex BTTR (screens), which is corroborated by other authors (Krause, Meyer & Meyer, 2008; Miniscalco, & Kot, 2009). Regardless, very satisfactory values for all the BTTR are found.

All these data could serve as a reference when planning the training for short-, medium-, and long-term. Coaches should know the priorities of their youth players, from which they can being to build their basketball learning experience. In any case, it is necessary for coaches to combine the preferences of the players with the actual needs of each educational stage.

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