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THE ORIENTEERING ELITE: WORLD CHAMPIONS SINGULARITIES

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Introduction

The pursuit of perfection has been one of the challenges that always was followed by the human being.

Currently no one is indifferent to the systematic and exceptional performances of athletes like Cristiano Ronaldo (soccer), Simone Luder Niglli and Thierry Gueorgiou (orienteering), Usain Bolt (athletics), Michael Phelps (swimming) among many others, and whose characteristics, capabilities and development paths up immediately a great admiration and curiosity to know: how they developed these abilities? What characteristics and skills makes them so exceptional? How can maintain their high performance? In this sense the results have been showing that the development of excellence in sport has its origins in childhood and it is the result of an investment and long-term commitment (Barreiros, Côté, & Fonseca, 2013). But there are few studies focusing in some manner as orienteering.

Objectives

This study aims to identify characteristics and peculiarities that mark the path of a group of excellent athletes in orienteering.

Method

Participants.

The study focused on a group of 5 elite athletes of orienteering (4 men and 1 woman) with a mean age of 25.8 ± 2.9 years, placed in the top 10 places in the world ranking of the International Orienteering Federation 2013. All the athletes were selected based on the following criteria: over 10 years of experience as orienteering athletes; were been world champions and vice world champions; were positioned in the top ten ranking of the International Orienteering Federation in 2013.

Instruments.

For data collection was elaborated an interview guide taking into account the objectives of the study and the literature search performed (Côté, Ericsson & Law, 2005). Later, the script was submitted for evaluation prior to a panel of experts on orienteering and qualitative methodology.

Procedures.

The collected data were analyzed through content analysis technique (Bardin, 2008,) recurring to QSR NVivo 9 software for coding the interviews.

Results and discussion

The obtained results show that to be excellent in orienteering implies early to develop personal excellence. It is very important the need of dedication, exclusivity, professionalism and work over time in pursuit of perfection in sport and in life. It is also recognized that the course of life of these individuals was characterized by the values of humility, brotherhood, commitment, generosity and loyalty to sport and society. In another perspective it is identified that the route to the excellence of these individuals is guided by the positive emotions associated to the passion for sport and particularly orienteering that materialize in perception of well-being pleasant with sport and with life.

Conclusions

The results show that despite the route of the uniqueness of life of these athletes, with regard to the process of achieving excellence, identifies some distinctive similarities. Thus, we can infer that the process for excellence in orienteering should be conceptually understood as a multidimensional, evolutionary, regular and dynamic process requiring the successful interaction between the bio-psycho-socio-axiological dimensions. Thus, the dimensions associated with the performance are effectively supplemented by the development moral and ethical values that make these individuals to effectively distinct excellence.

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