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Personality determinants at children and juniors in the game of tennis

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Abstract

The objective of our study is to find the personality factors that determine success in tennis. The study consists in two parts: a) a study on a group of 33 athletes aged 10 to 12 years (average = 11.5 and SD = .55); b) a study of 67 athletes aged 13 to 18 years (average = 15.39 and SD = 1.63). To find personality factors involved in tennis according to the age of athletes, in the first study it was used the HSPQ personality test for children, and in the second study the measurement was conducted using NEO-PIR test, using the procedure for computing all sizes and facets of the questionnaire. All these questionnaire results were compared with the position and the accumulated points in the national ranking. Our findings indicate that the explanatory factor of performance at the level of juniors and children tennis players is the level of conscientiousness.

Keywords: personality factors; tennis; ranking*;*

1. Structure

In high performance sports the level of physical and psychological development are superior developed compared to the ones of a person who only practices sports casually. This is the point that differentiates between the concept of health and performance sports. This type of activity is destined only to those who endure certain physiological and psychological changes right from the selection process. In tennis, success clearly depends not only on the athletic abilities and professional training, but also on a series of behavioural factors. Samulski (2002) and Wilson (2006) have presented a series of factors that interfere with sports performance in tennis, such as

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emotional control, orientation towards action, independence and responsibility. The youngsters who reach high performance in tennis, as in almost any other sports, frequently show specific personality features. Explaining performance based on personality is a challenge for the sports psychologists because of the pluralism of factors that must be sighted. A state of performance is being discussed in sports. This state, known as "flow" has been conceptualized and exemplified in a questionnaire built by Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi(1999). The "flow" state is based on the individual personality factors Koehen (2007). Aidman (2007) discusses the importance of combining personality factors with one's abilities, depending on the sport they practice. Emphasising individual differences and training them may lead to sports performance. Courneva & Hellsten, (1998) and Piedmont, Hill, Blanco, (1999) have studied personality factors based on the Big Five model in correlation with sports performance. Studies have shown positive correlations between personality factors like openness and consciousness in association with sports performance and negative correlations between neuroticism and sports. Jackson (2011), in a study on the relationship between the coach and the player showed the importance of consciousness and agreeability as important treats. Tennis is a sport where during the game, players go through different states. The performance state – the flow, can be described as a deviation from normal states on an individual.

Tennis players often face feelings of fury, anxiety, depression. These feelings can be caused by a less good game, making unforced mistakes, or simply by the player's state of that moment. Bolgar (2008) analysed the fury of tennis players on and outside the field, and the results have shown that the players who score high in fury, will also show a higher fury level on the tennis field. The performance of a tennis player can be influenced by the perspective he has on his adversary because of the emotional tension he experiences before or during the game. Lane and Terry (2000). The game perspective can also be influenced by the anxiety level. Farouk (2003), described anxiety as a disturbing factor, as tennis players with a high anxiety level become more vulnerable during the tennis game. Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Mpoumpaki, Theodorakis (2009) have examined the importance of self-esteem and self-trust in diminishing the negative effect of anxiety among tennis players, but without explaining if the lower anxiety will bring improvement in the athletes' results. Davis and Sime (2005) express their preference towards developing self-trust in spite of reducing the anxiety state, idea which originated in the sports performance studies where self-esteem showed a much higher correlation than anxiety in the athletes' results.

2. Methods

The study is divided into two parts: a) a study on a group of 33 athletes aged 10 to 12 years (average = 11.5 and SD = .55); b) a study of 66 athletes aged 13 to 18 years (average = 15.36 and SD = 1.63). In order to identify the personality factors involved in playing tennis according to the player's age, in the first study we used the HSPQ personality test (based on the 16 PF model), and in the second study the measurement was made with the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992) and Rosenberg's self-esteem inventory with 10 items. The NEO-PR fields (neuroticism; extraversion; openness; agreeability; consciousness) measure personality on this level, each side offering a deep analysis by measuring and explaining specific features from each five fields, using for the calculation procedure all the dimensions and sides of the questionnaire. All these results from the questionnaires have been compared with the place occupied in the national ranking.

3. Results and discussions

The first study: Descriptive data: the players who participated in this study are classified on the national level between the first place (the best player in the country) and the 105th place, with a mean of = 36.24, and standard deviation of 6.43. The 33 athletes responded to the HSPQ questionnaire who is composed of the following sides: cyclothymic (mean = 11; S.D 3.44), intelligence (mean = 6.42, SD = 1.5), Ego strength (mean = 13.18, SD, 4.07),