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ANALYSIS OF THE ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOVENIAN BASKETBALL CLUBS

ANALIZA ORGANIZIRANOSTI SLOVENSКИH KOŠARKARSKIH KLUBOV

Abstract

The aim of this study is to present the organisational characteristics of basketball clubs of the 1.A, 1.B and 2nd Slovenian basketball leagues (SKL) and to analyse them in terms of the guidelines for the development proposed by Basketball Federation of Slovenia. We were also interested to identify the characteristics that distinguish between clubs competing at different levels of quality. The data were acquired through a survey questionnaire which was completed by 26 basketball clubs. Differences between the clubs engaging in competitions at different levels were established using the Chi-square and one-way ANOVA statistical methods. The results show that the selected clubs failed to consistently provide suitable conditions for the work of their senior-men teams, namely the conditions stipulated in the guidelines proposed by federation. It may thus be established that these clubs often fail to provide their senior-men teams with a sufficient number of training sessions and that there are not enough professional and part-time coaches, doctors, physiotherapists and psychologists in the clubs in general. It would also be desirable that the senior-men teams of the 1.A SKL consist of a greater number of talented domestic players and fewer expensive foreign players.

Key words: Slovenian basketball clubs, senior-men teams, organisational activities

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Izvleček

V pričujoči študiji smo se odločili predstaviti nekatere značilnosti strokovnega in organizacijskega dela s članskimi ekipami košarkarskih društev v 1.A, 1.B in 2. slovenski košarkarski ligi in jih analizirati v luči smernic razvoja, ki jih je sprejela Košarkarska zveza Slovenije. Zanimalo nas je tudi v katerih od omenjenih značilnostih se društva, ki tekmujejo na različnih kakovostnih ravneh med seboj razlikujejo. Potrebne podatke smo pridobili s pomočjo anketnega vprašalnika, ki ga je izpolnilo 26 košarkarskih klubov. Za ugotavljanje razlik med društvi, ki nastopajo na različnih tekmovalnih ravneh smo uporabili statistični metodi hi-kvadrat in enostopenjsko analizo variance. Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da izbrana društva ne zagotavljajo vedno ustreznih pogojev za delo svojih članskih ekip oz. takšnih, ki jih narekujejo smernice razvoja, ki jih je sprejela košarkarska zveza. Ugotavljamo, da društva svojim članskimi ekipam pogosto ne zagotavljajo zadostnega števila treningov, da v društvi nasploh, kot tudi v članskih ekipah, primanjkuje profesionalnih in honorarnih trenerjev, kakor tudi zdravnikov, fizioterapevtov in psihologov.

Ključne besede: slovenska košarkarska društva, članske ekipe, strokovno-organizacijska dejavnost

INTRODUCTION

Sports organisations come in a variety of different forms and serve a number of functions. There are small, community-based organisations such as a local basketball club that plays in regional leagues and large professional operated organisations such as the IOC¹ or NBA² which stage major international events. Whether they are large or small, rich or poor, the managers of all sports organisations encounter some common issues. When we think of how an organisation is structured a number of things may spring to mind. A useful way to think about structure is that it comprises the formal and informal interactions that make up organisational life (Amis & Slack, 2003). While this is a useful starting point for helping us to understand the concept of organisational structure, it does not really assist us when we seek to learn how and why sports organisations are structured differently. Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings's (1992) archetypes and Mintzberg's (1979) structural configurations can help us understand how and why organisations have different designs.

Sports organisations are not immune to the influence of environmental changes, while increasing diversity can be expected in these organisations among their professionals, volunteers, athletes, coaches, officials, staff and administrators. The nature of the organisational function in professional sports teams has mainly been addressed in the economics-of-sport literature.

That is to say that previous studies of organisational efficiency in professional sports teams have concentrated exclusively on the technical efficiency of the coaching process (Dawson, Dobson, & Gerrard, 2000). From this perspective, professional sports teams are viewed as a sporting production function in which the output – team performance (i.e. wins or losses) – is produced from the input – playing talent – with individual player performance as an intermediate good. The coaching effect comprises both the “direct coaching effect” of transforming “raw” playing talent into on-field player performance. The fundamental problem in any empirical investigation of coaching efficiency is the difficulty of controlling for the available stock of playing talent. In order to quantify coaching efficiency, a measure of player quality is needed that is independent of player and team performance. Empirical studies have tended to only investigate the direct coaching effect using either player performance data or measures of player quality (Gerrard, 2005). Coaches work in accordance with the existing culture, the rules and standards prevailing in a given society and its sports environment; they have a large influence, in other words, they represent power.

In Slovenia, basketball is one of the most popular sports with a long and successful tradition dating back to the period before World War 2 (Pavlovič, 2000). In recent years, basketball in Slovenia has been the focus of about 120 clubs (Basketball Federation of Slovenia [BFS], 2005; Pavlovič, 2001) which are members of the Basketball Federation of Slovenia. The Federation was founded in 1950 and has been a FIBA³ member since 1992.

The outcome and simultaneously the proof of the high-quality expert work undertaken in Slovenian basketball are the many elite players and strong results obtained by basketball clubs and the national team. Even before it gained its independence, Slovenia had many elite players while in recent years the best Slovenian basketball players have been playing a prominent role in the top European and US (NBA) teams. Since Slovenia's independence the country's national teams have been successful in the senior-men and especially younger-age categories. Slovenian

¹ IOC (eng.): International Olympic Committee

² NBA (eng.): National Basketball Association

³ FIBA (fr.): Federation internationale de basketball

clubs also perform well in the international FIBA and ULEB⁴ competitions. In the past few years, despite its small population (2 million) and relatively modest economic strength Slovenia has had a representative in the strongest European club competition (Euroleague) and several representatives in lower competitions (ULEB Cup and Goodyear League).

All of these successes and results (especially at the club level) in a sport demanding significant investments have mostly been achieved with relatively few financial resources and are by no means coincidental. They are primarily a consequence of the high quality expert (especially coaches) work in basketball clubs (Mihevc, 2004; Šip, 2004). Nevertheless, in recent years some negative trends have been noticed in the development of Slovenian basketball, with this also being reflected in poorer results. These trends primarily stem from the changed conditions in which basketball clubs work and the deteriorated financial position of the clubs and this sport at large (Erčulj & Dežman, 2005). Negative aspects of commercialisation, globalisation (some of them that have an influence on sport in general are described by Maguire (2000) and his associates (Maguire, Jarvie, Mansfield, & Bradley, 2002) and Europeanisation, the currently unfavourable social and political environment, poor finances available from selling rights for TV coverage and admission tickets (Bednarik, Ferenčak, & Turšič, 2002; Bednarik, Simoneti, Kolenc, & Šugman, 2000) and certain other factors pose a considerable threat and hinder the development of Slovenian basketball (Erčulj & Doupona Topič, 2005). The quality and efficiency of related professional (especially coaches) work in the clubs depends directly on the factors mentioned above, which have an influence on the worse financial situation of the clubs and minor interest in playing and coaching basketball. In recent years a decline in the level of expert work has been noticed in those segments of basketball which are less attractive in commercial and marketing terms (e.g. younger-age groups and senior-men teams participating in the lower level and less popular competitions) (Erčulj & Dežman, 2005).

Aware of the changed conditions and the abovementioned factors that hinder the development of Slovenian basketball the Basketball Federation of Slovenia [BFS] adopted some developmental decisions and a document entitled 'Guidelines on the development of basketball in Slovenia'. This document defines basketball clubs as the main promoters of competitive basketball in Slovenia and specifies their tasks, responsibilities and competencies. Basketball clubs are thus responsible for (Dežman, Drvarič, Krump, Fišer, Kobilica, & Majer, 2003):

- providing a stable inflow of financial sources in line with objective targets;
- setting optimal conditions for the regular training and competing of all categories of male and female players; and
- ensuring the development of competitive basketball in their area.

In the abovementioned document basketball clubs are classified in three categories according to the competitive level involved (Dežman et al., 2003):

a) Promoters of international level basketball

They compete at international competitions with senior teams. They are directly responsible for developing the quality of Slovenian basketball and the most promising male and female players. They should employ at least three professional coaches (one should only be responsible for working with younger categories) and a physiotherapist. They should provide their senior-men team with at least ten training sessions a week and be able to cover all their financial liabilities to players, experts and other club employees.

⁴ ULEB (fr.): Union des ligues Européennes de basket-ball

b) Promoters of national level basketball

Their senior teams compete in the Slovenian 1.A and 1.B basketball leagues. They are directly responsible for developing the quality of Slovenian basketball and promising male and female players. They should employ at least two professional coaches full-time (one per senior team) and one physiotherapist part-time. They should provide their senior team with at least eight training sessions a week.

c) Promoters of local level basketball

They compete in lower leagues with senior teams. They are indirectly responsible for the development of quality Slovenian basketball. They should provide their senior team with at least four training sessions a week.

The aim of this study is to present some of the organisational characteristics of senior-men teams in the basketball clubs of the 1.A, 1.B and 2nd Slovenian basketball leagues (SKL), and to analyse them vis-à-vis both the decisions of the BFS assembly and the 'Guidelines on the development of basketball in Slovenia' which were accepted by the same assembly in 2003. We were also interested in which characteristics distinguish the clubs competing at different quality levels that are the promoters of international, national and local level basketball and whether they are meeting the standards set by the BFS.

METHOD

Participants

The study encompassed all basketball clubs that in the 2003/2004 season competed with their top (senior-men) teams at one of the three highest competitive levels in Slovenia: the 1.A Slovenian basketball league (hereinafter: 1.A SKL), the 1.B Slovenian basketball league (hereinafter: 1.B SKL) and the 2nd Slovenian basketball league (hereinafter: 2. SKL). In the mentioned competitive season, 14 teams competed in the 1.A SKL, eight of which participated in the study (57.1%). Of these, three clubs, i.e. teams, took part in international club competitions and they are thus the promoters of elite basketball in Slovenia, while the remaining five may be classified as the promoters of quality basketball. Of the 13 1.B SKL teams, 11 or 84.6% of them participated in the study. With regard to the 2. SKL, the response rate was, as expected, poorer. Of the 18 teams, only seven participated in the study, or 38.9%. Hence, of the 45 1.A, 1.B and 2. SKL basketball clubs 26 or 57.7% participated in the study. Those clubs whose senior-men teams compete in the 1.B and 2. SKL are classified as the promoters of competitive basketball in Slovenia.

Instruments and procedure

The data were acquired through a survey questionnaire sent by regular mail and e-mail to 45 basketball clubs. It encompassed 79 questions seeking general data on organisational characteristics in the club and the work with the top (senior-men) team and younger selections. The questions were answered by the clubs' competent officials. For the most part these people were the head coaches and the coaches of senior-men teams. The clubs also received detailed instructions together with the questionnaire, while the author of the questionnaire was available for consultation by e-mail and telephone.

The collected data were processed using the SPSS 12 statistical software. The characteristics of the selected clubs were assessed by means of basic descriptive statistical parameters. Differences between the clubs engaging in competitions at different levels were established using the Chi-square and one-way ANOVA statistical methods.

RESULTS

Professional staff

In 23 clubs there are 121 coaches working which, on average, represents 5.2 coaches per team (see Table 1). There are statistically significant differences between the 1.A, 1.B and 2. SKL clubs in terms of the number of coaches. As expected, most coaches work in the 1.A SKL clubs (slightly more than seven on average), while the 1.B and 2. SKL clubs are quite equal in this respect. Twenty-five of the 121 coaches work on a professional basis, most of them again in the 1.A SKL (slightly less than two per club on average). Only three of all the coaches are not paid for their work.

Forty-four coaches work with senior-men teams, which is on average slightly less than two per team. Again the highest number of coaches is recorded in the 1.A SKL teams and the lowest in the 2. SKL teams. Approximately one-third of the coaches in the senior-men teams are professionals. Of course, the highest number of them is found in the 1.A SKL (1.1 on average) and the lowest in the 2. SKL (just 0.1 on average).

Table 1: Number of players and coaches in senior-men teams of the 1.A, 1.B and 2. SKL basketball clubs (descriptive statistics and ANOVA)

		N	Mean	Sum	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
players	1.A SKL	8	11.88	95.0	1.55	0.55	10	14	0.73	0.493
	1.B SKL	11	12.27	135.0	2.05	0.62	10	16		
	2.SKL	6	13.67	82.0	4.88	1.99	7	19		
	Total	25	12.48	312.0	2.81	0.56	7	19		
coach_a	1.A SKL	8	7.25	58.0	2.25	0.80	4.0	10.0	7.60	0.004
	1.B SKL	11	4.18	46.0	1.08	0.32	2.0	5.0		
	2.SKL	4	4.25	17.0	2.36	1.18	1.0	6.0		
	Total	23	5.26	121.0	2.26	0.47	1.0	10.0		
coach_p	1.A SKL	8	1.87	15.0	1.81	0.64	0.0	5.0	1.50	0.249
	1.B SKL	9	1.00	9.0	1.66	0.55	0.0	5.0		
	2.SKL	4	0.25	1.0	0.50	0.25	0.0	1.0		
	Total	21	1.19	25.0	1.63	0.36	0.0	5.0		
coach_as	1.A SKL	8	2.37	19.0	1.06	0.37	1.0	4.0	1.84	0.185
	1.B SKL	11	1.73	19.0	0.79	0.24	1.0	3.0		
	2.SKL	4	1.50	6.0	0.58	0.29	1.0	2.0		
	Total	23	1.91	44.0	0.90	0.19	1.0	4.0		
coach_ps	1.A SKL	8	1.19	9.5	1.07	0.38	0.0	3.0	1.99	0.165
	1.B SKL	9	0.50	4.5	1.00	0.33	0.0	3.0		
	2.SKL	4	0.12	0.5	0.25	0.12	0.0	.5		
	Total	21	0.69	14.5	0.99	0.22	0.0	3.0		

Legend:

coach_a number of coaches per team

coach_p number of professional coaches

coach_as number of senior-men teams' coaches

coach_ps number of professional senior-men teams' coaches

Table 2: Co-operation with a physiotherapist, psychologist and medical doctor (results of Chi-square test)

		Competitive level (league)			Total	Chi-square Sig.
		1. A SKL	1. B SKL	2. SKL		
physi	1 (YES)	8 (100.0 %)	8 (72.2 %)	2 (28.6 %)	18 (69.2 %)	
	2 (NO)	0 (0.0 %)	3 (27.3 %)	5 (71.4 %)	8 (30.8 %)	
Total		8	11	7	26	.011
psych	1 (YES)	2 (25.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	2 (7.7 %)	
	2 (NO)	6 (75.0 %)	11 (100.0 %)	7 (100.0 %)	24 (92.3 %)	
Total		8	11	7	26	.087
doc	1 (YES)	7 (87.5 %)	6 (54.5 %)	1 (16.7 %)	14 (56.0 %)	
	2 (NO)	1 (12.5 %)	5 (45.5 %)	5 (83.3 %)	11 (44.0 %)	
Total		8	11	6	25	.030

Legend:

physi physiotherapist

psych psychologist

doc medical doctor

The lack of professional staff is also evident in the co-operation of clubs or their senior-men selections with a physiotherapist psychologist and doctor. We established that on average 69% of all clubs participating in the study co-operate with a physiotherapist. Their number, i.e. percentage, decreases with the level of competition. Hence, all the 1.A SKL clubs or senior-men teams work with a physiotherapist, while in the 1.B SKL and the 2. SKL the respective percentages are 72% and only 28%. The 1.A SKL teams (all but one) work with a medical doctor most frequently, followed by the 1.B SKL with 54%, while in the 2. SKL only one of the six teams discussed works with a doctor. As regards working with a physiotherapist and a doctor, statistically significant differences were established between the teams of the 1.A. 1.B and 2. SKL. Only two clubs of the 1.A SKL work with a psychologist, while at the lower level there is no such co-operation at all.

Playing staff

In the selected 26 clubs or their senior-men teams 312 basketball players play basketball (see Table 3), which is on average slightly more than 12 players per team. The number of players in teams differs only minimally in terms of the competition level.

The 1.A. 1.B and 2. SKL teams differ statistically significantly in terms of the number of players emerging from their own ranks. As expected, there are more of these 'home-grown' players in lower-league teams (as many as 73% in the 1.B SKL), while in the 1.A SKL there are only slightly less than six i.e. half of all players. There are practically no differences in the number of domestic (Slovenian) players who were not trained from the outset in their own club and are the key players. The number of junior players in senior-men teams decreases with the level of competition (most junior players are found in the 2. SKL senior-men teams, and the least in the 1.A SKL senior-men teams), however the differences are not statistically significant. A similar finding was established for the number of borrowed players. On the other hand, large and statistically significant differences were established in the number of players with the status of a foreigner and in the number of players with a foreigner status who are the key players. Foreigners are only members of the 1.A SKL teams and almost all of them play an important role in their teams as they represent key players.

Table 3: Some characteristics and composition of the playing staff (descriptive statistics and ANOVA)

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
Young	1.A SKL	8	5.88	1.73	.77	4	8	3.44	0.049
	1.B SKL	11	9.00	2.10	.63	5	12		
	2.SKL	7	9.00	4.40	1.66	0	13		
	Total	26	8.12	3.09	0.61	0	13		
main_si	1.A SKL	7	2.43	.98	0.37	1	4	0.27	0.762
	1.B SKL	11	2.91	1.64	0.49	0	6		
	2.SKL	6	2.50	1.64	0.67	0	5		
	Total	24	2.67	1.43	0.29	0	6		
Fore	1.A SKL	8	3.63	3.81	1.349	0	11	7.22	0.004
	1.B SKL	9	0.00	.00	0.00	0	0		
	2.SKL	7	0.00	.00	0.00	0	0		
	Total	24	1.21	2.73	.558	0	11		
Main_for	1.A SKL	8	3.13	2.85	1.01	0	8	9.61	0.001
	1.B SKL	9	0.00	.000	0.00	0	0		
	2.SKL	7	0.00	.000	0.00	0	0		
	Total	24	1.04	2.18	0.44	0	8		
play_pay	1.A SKL	8	11.13	1.73	0.61	9	14	20.61	0.000
	1.B SKL	11	7.73	4.80	1.45	0	15		
	2.SKL	7	0.29	.76	0.29	0	2		
	Total	26	6.77	5.33	1.05	0	15		
play_pro	1.A SKL	8	7.00	4.81	1.70	1	14	14.07	0.000
	1.B SKL	10	1.00	1.33	0.42	0	4		
	2.SKL	7	0.00	.000	0.00	0	0		
	Total	25	2.64	4.11	0.82	0	14		
play_bor	1.A SKL	8	.38	0.52	0.18	0	1	3.14	0.062
	1.B SKL	11	1.18	1.33	0.40	0	4		
	2.SKL	7	1.86	1.34	0.51	0	4		
	Total	26	1.12	1.24	0.24	0	4		
Junior	1.A SKL	8	2.13	1.64	0.58	0	4	1.47	0.251
	1.B SKL	11	3.73	2.33	0.70	0	8		
	2.SKL	7	4.43	3.99	1.51	0	12		
	Total	26	3.42	2.76	0.54	0	12		
Injur	1.A SKL	8	2.50	1.93	0.68	0	5	0.00	0.997
	1.B SKL	11	2.45	1.37	0.41	0	4		
	2.SKL	7	2.43	1.99	0.75	0	6		
	Total	26	2.46	1.65	0.32	0	6		

Legend:

young young players developed in lower-leagues teams

main_si main players who are Slovenian

junior junior players in senior teams

play_bor players borrowed from other teams

fore foreign players

main_for main players who are foreigners

play_pay paid players

play_pro professional players

injur injured players

Table 4: Some characteristics of training sessions and games (descriptive statistics and ANOVA)

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
train_se	1.A SKL	7	364.00	108.82	41.13	196	500	10.27	0.000
	1.B SKL	11	195.36	55.34	16.68	100	312		
	2.SKL	4	190.50	92.90	46.45	73	300		
	Total	22	248.14	112.43	23.97	73	500		
hour_se	1.A SKL	7	656.57	214.87	81.21	300	920	8.59	0.003
	1.B SKL	9	343.22	144.99	48.33	150	650		
	2.SKL	4	300.25	115.78	57.89	168	450		
	Total	20	444.30	226.62	50.67	150	920		
train_we	1.A SKL	7	8.14	3.34	1.26	2	11	5.67	0.011
	1.B SKL	11	5.82	1.83	0.55	4	9		
	2.SKL	6	4.00	0.89	0.36	3	5		
	Total	24	6.04	2.64	0.54	2	11		
train_min	1.A SKL	8	115.00	10.69	3.78	90	120	3.57	0.045
	1.B SKL	11	99.09	13.75	4.15	90	120		
	2.SKL	6	95.00	22.58	9.22	60	120		
	Total	25	103.20	17.01	3.40	60	120		
prepar	1.A SKL	8	7.88	6.77	2.39	0	15	4.39	0.024
	1.B SKL	11	2.18	2.60	0.78	0	7		
	2.SKL	7	2.71	2.93	1.11	0	7		
	Total	26	4.08	4.93	0.97	0	15		
ind%	1.A SKL	7	26.29	15.97	6.03	0	45	1.01	0.382
	1.B SKL	11	24.09	22.00	6.63	5	30		
	2.SKL	5	31.00	21.33	9.54	0	40		
	Total	23	26.26	19.49	4.06	0	45		
games_off	1.A SKL	8	39.63	11.20	3.96	30	65	12.43	0.000
	1.B SKL	11	29.55	2.07	0.62	26	32		
	2.SKL	6	21.83	3.82	1.56	18	28		
	Total	25	30.92	9.39	1.88	18	65		
games_all	1.A SKL	8	57.50	13.30	4.70	32	75	7.88	0.003
	1.B SKL	11	44.45	4.86	1.47	40	54		
	2.SKL	6	39.17	8.54	3.49	30	50		
	Total	25	47.36	11.47	2.29	30	75		

Legend:

train_se number of training sessions in season

hour_se hours of training sessions in season

train_we training session per week

train_min duration of training session

prepar number of days of preparation outside the come club

games_all number of all games in season

games_off number of official games in season

%ind percentage of individual training sessions

Of course, there are great differences in terms of the financial rewards or financial status of players. In the 1.A SKL almost all players are paid fees or salaries on the basis of a contract; seven or 59% of them on average play basketball professionally. In the 1.B SKL 63% of all players are paid fees or a salary on the basis of a contract, however on average only one player in a team plays basketball professionally. In the 2. SKL there are practically no paid players since

all of them play basketball as amateurs. In spite of the differences in the number or duration of training sessions and games, as shown in Table 4, no differences were established in the number of injured players.

Training sessions and games characteristics

As regards the number of all training sessions in a season, the 1.A SKL teams are considerably ahead since on average they have approximately 364 trainings in a season which is almost twice as many as the 1.B and 2. SKL teams (see Table 4). Consequently, the 1.A SKL teams dominate in terms of the number of training hours (60 min) in a season. Both variables show statistically significant differences ($p < 0.01$).

Large and statistically significant differences may also be established in the answers to the question about the number of training sessions per week ($F = 5.67$, $p < 0.05$) and the average length (duration) of training ($F = 3.57$, $p < 0.05$). The 1.A SKL teams have more than eight training sessions a week on average, while the 2. SKL teams only have four. A training session (unit of practice) of a 1.A SKL team lasts for almost two hours on average (115 minutes), while that of the 1.B and 2. SKL teams is substantially shorter (99 or 95 minutes). Statistically significant differences ($F = 4.38$, $p < 0.05$) may also be seen in the variable *prepar* i.e. the number of days of preparation outside the home club. The preparations of the 1.A SKL teams outside their home club last slightly less than eight days a season on average, while those of the 1.B and 2. SKL teams last less than three days.

Large and statistically significant differences were also established in the number of all games in the 2003/2004 season ($F = 7.88$, $p < 0.01$), as well as in the number of official games played in the same season ($F = 12.42$, $p < 0.01$). On average, the 1.A SKL teams played 57 games in the season (39 were official), the 1.B SKL teams 44 games (29 official) and the 2. SKL teams only 39 games (21 official). It is also interesting to note there were no statistically significant differences between the 1.A., 1.B and 2. SKL teams in terms of the share (percentage) of individual training sessions. This share is even lower in the 1.A SKL than in the 2. SKL teams.

DISCUSSION

The “Guidelines on the development of basketball in Slovenia” (Dežman et al., 2003) require that basketball clubs base their operations on a long-term orientation and constantly achieve their objectives (in particular their long-term ones). Such an orientation and the achievement of objectives can only result from systematic and quality coaches and organisational work which is also based on the provision of the best possible conditions for the work of the senior-men teams in the 1.A, 1.B and 2. SKL.

Adherence to and implementation of the guidelines must also be ensured in that part of the text referring to the classification of clubs in three categories (promoters of international, national and local basketball) and the ensuing responsibilities, obligations and duties of clubs. The results of our study show that those clubs functioning as the promoters of international, national and local basketball fail to consistently ensure adequate conditions for the work of their senior-men teams.

Moreover, it was established that the clubs 1.A and 1.B SKL fail to provide a sufficient number of coaches. In the 1.A SKL the clubs have on average less than two professional coaches, of

whom there is slightly more than one in their senior-men teams. On average, one professional coach works in the 1.B SKL clubs and every second senior-men team has a professional coach. All of the above is substantially below the level stipulated in the mentioned guidelines which prescribes three professional coaches in the 1.A and two professional coaches in 1.B SKL. On the other hand, coaches are unwilling to work on a voluntary basis even if such work could broaden their knowledge and experience. Of the total 121 coaches, only three work for free. The clubs will have to pay greater attention to finding candidates for coaches, provide them with expert training and to offer highly-trained and qualified coaches suitable conditions for their normal work and development.

Given that the 1.A SKL basketball clubs are directly and predominantly responsible for developing quality Slovenian basketball and developing talented players (this is also set out in the guidelines), it is highly desirable that the senior-men teams of the said clubs include more players emerging from their own junior team. In this respect, the situation in the 1.B and 2. SKL teams is much more satisfactory. The figures on the number of junior players in senior-men teams may be discussed in a similar context as this number decreases with the level of competition (most junior players are seen in the 2. SKL senior-men teams and the least in the 1.A senior-men teams). This information also leads to the conclusion that work with young players in the 1.A SKL clubs is not at an appropriate level and that perhaps they are paying insufficient attention to the development of talented players.

We would also like to point out the large number of players with the status of a foreigner in the 1.A SKL. According to Pajer (2006), the number of foreign players grew from 37 to 107 in the period 1996 to 2002. In compliance with the guidelines (Dežman et al., 2003) foreign basketball players should primarily fill in the gaps in the structure of senior-men teams. The clubs should select a suitable number of quality foreign basketball players and carry out an appropriate selection procedure. If foreign basketball players are of inferior quality and inappropriately selected, then they take the place of talented domestic players and hinder their development. However, the results of our study show that in most cases those players with a foreign status are the key players in their teams. In view of the above it may be assumed that these are more or less quality players but, of course, this does not mean that their quality is adequate and that they were selected appropriately given the team structure. This problem is even more pressing since the majority of clubs in the 1.A SKL face great financial difficulties. One reason for buying expensive foreign, top-level (star) players could be marketing considerations, as suggested by Wen-Guu (2005).

Both the number of professional basketball players and the number of players who are paid fees or salaries on the basis of a contract are highest in the senior-men teams of the 1.A SKL clubs and they decrease rapidly in the lower leagues. In the 2. SKL there are practically no players on the payroll. In view of the situation in Slovenian basketball it may be estimated that, in terms of this parameter, there are considerable differences within the 1.A SKL as some teams (primarily those taking part in international competitions) operate at a purely professional level while others are far from this. Given that concrete and detailed data on the amounts paid to the players are unavailable, no more detailed analysis can be made of this aspect of the basketball clubs' operations. Even though this is a sensitive subject and it is difficult to obtain accurate data, we should try to focus more attention on these problems in the future.

The results of the study also show that, in terms of the number and duration of training sessions, the 1.A SKL teams are predominant. In line with the guidelines (Dežman et al., 2003),

these teams should receive training at least ten times a week, something which is not confirmed by our study. In the 1. B SKL at least 8 training sessions a week are prescribed, yet we found less than six sessions a week on average (Dežman et al., 2003). It should also be noted that the training sessions of the 1.B SKL teams are on average 16 minutes shorter.

The results of our study point out that the 1.A SKL teams play the highest number of games (on average slightly less than 40 official games per season). However, notwithstanding the large differences in the number of games no differences were found between the 1.A, 1.B and 2. SKL teams in terms of the number of injuries. In recent years, the professional basketball community in Slovenia has entered into a discussion about whether too many games are being played in a single competitive season. The criticism here is that teams do not have enough time for training (adequate preparation) and, consequently, the number of injuries is rising due to the greater stress and overloading of players. However, in order to draw more objective conclusions, the number of games and injuries in those teams additionally burdened by international competitions needs to be analysed.

As regards basketball clubs' co-operation with doctors and physiotherapists, a satisfactory level can only be found in the 1.A SKL clubs i.e. their senior-men teams. In the competitions at a lower level, physiotherapists are practically not involved in the preparation of players and teams even though the guidelines stipulate this. A similar trend was established with co-operation with a doctor.

It is also interesting to note that only two 1.A SKL teams work with a psychologist, while the 1.B and 2. SKL teams do not work with psychologists at all. In view of the importance of psychological preparation and the trends seen in some other sports, this result is somewhat surprising, points to certain deficiencies and shows that there is still some room for manoeuvring in the quality preparation of teams and individual players. Certainly, co-operation with sports psychologists is thwarted or hindered by poor financial resources and, on the other hand, the lack of qualified expert staff (sports psychologists specialised in basketball) along with the fact that some coaches consider psychological preparation as being less important.

Owing to the changed circumstances in Slovenian basketball in which basketball clubs operate and particularly due to the extremely rapid and strong commercialisation, new relationships have to be established between the promoters of quality basketball (Erčulj & Doupona Topič, 2005). These should be based on solutions underpinned by expertise that will take into consideration the particularities of the Slovenian sphere, the sport itself and individual clubs. The uncritical or even blind copying of others and inconsiderate interventions may shake Slovenian basketball to its foundations. Elite clubs should not think only of themselves but try to find adequate solutions (compromises) with other clubs to the long-term benefit of all Slovenian basketball and, indirectly, also to the benefit of themselves. In the future they have to continue with a responsible attitude to the development of Slovenian basketball in its entirety, not only for themselves (Erčulj & Dežman, 2005).

The said changes call for an active, responsible and professional approach of the BFS to promoting and guiding the development of Slovenian basketball. Review and modifying the current 'Guidelines on the development of basketball in Slovenia', including on the basis of the results of our study, is quite necessary. To promote the further development of basketball in Slovenia, suitable conditions for quality training and competitive activities have to be put in place. This is primarily the task of those people occupying the leading positions in the BFS and in the various basketball clubs.

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