Leite, N.; Sampaio, J.
Early sport involvement in Portuguese young basketball players
Motricidade, vol. 5, núm. 3, 2009, p. 48
Desafio Singular - Unipessoal, Lda
Vila Real, Portugal

Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=273020560019
Early sport involvement in Portuguese young basketball players

N. Leite, J. Sampaio

Research Centre for Sports Sciences, Health and Human Development (CIDESD) – Portugal

At this time, various procedures have been used to examine the activities that promote sport expertise throughout the lifespan. Still, no standardized method with high reliability, high validity, and high discriminatory power has been proposed to collect data and characterize expertise development in team sports. Moreover, the problems are reinforced due to the absence of facts that help a better understanding of the initial stages of development. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyze the early sport involvement in young basketball players.

To accomplish this, 750 young basketball players filled out a previously validated questionnaire based on retrospective information related to the training activities performed during their involvement in sport. The sample was divided according to the gender and competition group level: A (male n=190; female n=188) and B (male n=233; female n=139). To test for statistical differences among the four groups’ answers on their involvement pattern in all long-term developmental variables, non parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were performed. Significance was accepted at 5%. Bonferroni adjustment was applied to correct for multiple tests. All data were analyzed with the statistical package SPSS for Windows, release 16.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL).

The results supported that long-term player development starting age in all groups occurs preferentially between 6 and 10 years (male: A=87.4% and B=81.5%; female: A=83.0% and B=80.6%). These results are confirmed by the Basketball starting age, as the majority of elements of both groups started practicing basketball between 6 and 10 years of age (male: A=71.1% and B=53.6%; female: A=54.8% and B=46.0%). However, these results suggest the existence of a trend whereas a significant number of players reported started practicing later, e.g. between 11 and 14 years of age (male=38.3% and females=48.3%). Results also confirmed that both male and female of group A have longer seasons, which average 10 months, while the subjects in group B reported practicing during 9 months.

Breath of exposure to other sports during the developmental stages was also examined. However, differences between groups didn’t allow us to establish clear distinctions between players when related to the gender and competition group level. One important finding was that, during the initial stage of development, male preferred (besides basketball) other team sport, while female privileged individual sports. Finally, results also suggest that both male and female belonging to the higher group level spent more time practicing. This evidence was identified during the initial early stages of development, initiation and orientation (during initiation, nearly 40% of the male Group A and 50% of the female Group A reported spending more 240 minutes a week, while in Group B barely exceed 30%).

Key words: basketball, young players, training activities