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STUDY CONCERNING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING SKILLS OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS LEVEL C

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Abstract

Football, similar with other sports, requires not only a high level of physical performance, but mental preparation and psychological skills. Psychological characteristics of football players were analyzed by Junge et al., (2000) in relationship with injury risk factors. Junge and his associates believed that identifying the psychological factors that influence soccer performance could provide important information to improve the athlete's preparation for the game, influence the occurrence of injuries and lead to intervention methods to improve fair play.

Keywords: *football, coping skill, team game*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern days of scientific knowledge, man is making rapid progress in all areas of life including that of sports and games. This progress in sport performance may be attributed to the scientific investigations for the better performance of sportsmen and sportswomen, for improved scientific and specific training methods used by the coaches and also for the better understanding of the human body and functions.

Today, it is important for the sport coaches as well as athletes to recognize that science of psychology plays an important part in the field of sports. The psychological preparation on the basis of psychological characteristics of the sport, the competition conditions and the personality structure (profile) of the sportsmen, is planned and carried out with the aim of enabling the sportsman to be in an optimum psychic state at the time of competition so that he can achieve the maximum possible performance.

Many researches underline that psychological characteristic of exemplary sport participants may allow identification of the strengths and weaknesses of individual athletes, and could, with strategic interventions, facilitate performance enhancement.

Football, similar with other sports, requires not only a high level of physical performance, but mental preparation and psychological skills. While coaches are skilled in identifying the physical characteristics needed to succeed athletically, they may lack the skills to make a psychological assessment (Humara, 2000). Sports psychology provides an essential theoretical basis for understanding both individual and team athletic performance.

In the same time sport psychology offers practical and effective methods for team building and sharpening individual athlete and team focus. "Knowledge of sports psychology will help a coach find solutions to problems encountered by the athlete, the team, and the coaching staff during training and competition" (Jonathan Reeser, Roald Bahr, 2003, p. 211).

One research study involving peak performance and successful athletes showed that the psychological profile of peak performing athletes included high self-confidence, energy, feelings of control, concentration, positive attitudes, determination, and commitment (Krane & Williams, 2006).

Psychological characteristics of football players were analyzed by Junge et al., (2000) in relationship with injury risk factors. Junge and his associates believed that identifying the psychological factors that influence football performance could provide important information to improve the athlete's preparation for the game, influence the occurrence of injuries and lead to intervention methods to improve fair play.

The Junge's study clarified that the psychological characteristics of players who did not talk or listen to an opponent during a game were almost the opposite of those who did. Players, who refrained from verbal interaction with the opponent more often prepared mentally for the game, and coped better with adversity than the players who talked or listened to an opponent during the game.

Psychological skills assessment in conjunction with physical skills may have a significant impact on the identification of those athletes that may have future athletic success (Humara, 2005).

PURPOSE OF STUDY.

The broad purpose of this study was to examine the psychological characteristics of competitive male football players level C and identified which psychological coping skill are predominant and which skill need to be addressed by the coach or the psychologist in the mental training. More specified we want to identify if there are some characteristic specific to football player regarding the athletics coping skill. This means knowing the strengths, in order to capitalize on them, and the weaknesses, in order to compensate for or improve on them. As such, a self-assessment of skills is a good place to start.

METHODS.

Participants

A total of 29 football players level C participated in this study. The age of the participants was between 18 years old and 27 years old. All of the participants are playing for two local football teams in Bacău.

Measure

Athletic Coping Skills Inventory -- 28

Psychological coping skills were assessed using the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory – 28 (ACSI-28; Smith, Schultz, Smoll, & Placek, 1995). The ACSI-28 is a self report questionnaire developed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The inventory consisted of a 28-item scale measuring seven classes of sport-specific psychological coping skills including coping with adversity, peaking under pressure, goal setting and mental preparation, concentration; freedom from worry, confidence and achievement motivation, and coachability.

This measure requires athletes to respond on a 4-point scale (0 = almost never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = almost always) to 28 items regarding psychological skills. Smith et al. (1995) found support for a 7-factor model: 1) Coping with

Adversity (e.g., “When things are going badly, I tell myself to keep calm, and this works for me”), 2) Peaking under Pressure (e.g., “To me, pressure situations are challenges that I welcome”), 3) Goal Setting/Mental Preparation (e.g., “I set my own performance goals for each practice”), 4) Concentration (e.g., “When I’m playing tennis, I can focus my attention and block out distractions”), 5) Freedom from Worry (e.g., “I worry quite a bit about what others think of my performance”), 6) Confidence and Achievement Motivation (e.g., “I don’t have to be pushed to practice or play hard: I give 100%;” “I feel confident that I will play well”), and 7) Coach-ability (e.g., “If a coach/instructor criticizes me, I correct the mistake without getting upset about it”). Each factor consisted of four items. Higher scores indicated higher perceived competence.

Procedure

An inventory package containing a two-page questionnaire was provided to the 29 football players. At the top of the first page subjects were instructed to fill out a brief demographic summary. The categories included age, game, gender, and participation level. All 28 statements were formatted on a four point Likert type scale with response choices being "Almost Never", "Sometimes", "Often", and "Almost Always".

The questionnaire is psychometrically sound and has substantial support in the literature as a valid assessment tool, which will ensure the most valid results.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The results recorded in the assessment of the psychological skills using the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory on seven dimensions for the football players and the arithmetic mean, maximum value and minimal value were computed and data pertaining to this have been presented in table 1.

Table 1 Centralizing table with the results recorded in the ACSI-28 assessment

Nome	C1 Coping with adversity	C2 Coachability	C3 Concentration	C4 Confidence and achievement motivation	C5 Goal setting and mental preparation	C6 Peaking under pressure	C7 Freedom from worry	Total Score
V.A.	10	8	6	6	8	6	9	53
B.C.	8	2	9	4	8	4	6	41
D.I.	7	6	5	9	7	8	6	48
M.A.	7	4	7	6	6	5	8	45
B.A.	7	9	4	5	7	8	5	45
S.I.	4	4	7	9	7	7	3	40
F.M.	5	4	9	6	7	4	5	40
Z.A.	9	12	9	10	8	1	7	56
A.B.	7	9	9	9	6	8	11	59
G.S.	7	7	1	4	6	6	4	35
D.A.	11	7	11	12	12	12	1	66

M.D	11	8	7	12	9	9	1	57
N.V.	5	6	8	9	6	9	8	57
S.A	10	9	9	9	8	11	7	63
S.L.	9	10	8	9	11	7	7	61
S. T.	6	9	5	10	8	8	5	51
M.U.	5	7	5	9	11	8	5	50
B.E.	7	7	8	10	11	9	5	57
G.H.	7	9	7	11	11	8	4	57
A.N.	8	8	6	9	7	8	4	50
B.A.	6	7	8	10	10	8	3	52
R.U.	5	7	7	6	8	8	3	44
B.U.	8	9	8	12	11	11	4	63
G.A.	7	6	7	6	8	7	7	48
P.A.	5	8	4	7	10	10	1	45
V.A.	7	6	5	10	6	8	4	46
F.U.	7	6	6	9	8	7	6	49
P.U.	6	8	6	10	9	7	4	50
G.H.	7	10	9	11	12	11	3	63
Medie	7,1724	7,3103	6,8966	8,5862	8,4828	7,6897	5,0345	51,414
Max	11	12	11	12	12	12	11	66
Min	4	2	1	4	6	1	1	35

The results recorded on the football players' assessment of the psychological skills using the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory are showing a high level at the following items concentration, freedom from worry, confidence and achievement motivation.

In sport, confidence has been defined by Vealey (2000) as "the beliefs or degree of certainty that individuals possess about their ability to be successful" (p. 556).

It is evident from figure 1, that there was a statistically significant difference between some of the psychological coping skills characteristic of football players. When we look at the medium score of the seven characteristic we can observe that the highest score are obtain in Confidence and achievement motivation (8,59), Goal setting and mental preparation (8,49), Peaking under pressure (7,69). The lowest score was obtained in Freedom from worry (5,03).

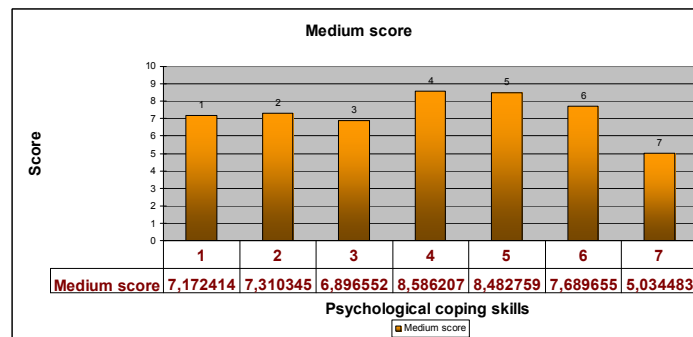


Figure 1. Medium score on all seven psychological coping skills.

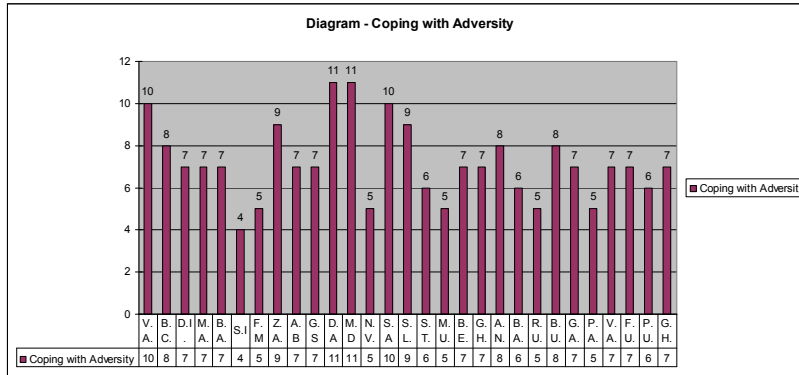


Figure 2. Diagram – Coping with Adversity scores accomplished by the football players

Coping with adversity - The ability to remain emotionally stable and positive during competition no matter the situation. Coping with adversity as a predictor of success in elite athletes is also a substrate of experience and is consistent with previous research (Humara, 2005; Griffith 1928). Coping with adversity is the ability to remain emotionally stable and positive during competition no matter the situation (Weinberg & Gould, 2003).

When we analyze the football players from our study on coping with adversity skill we can see that only 6 of them have a high score (9-11) at this

factor and 9 of them have low scores (4-6) and 14 of them the majority scored average (7-8). (Figure 2)

An athlete who has experienced adversity in previous endeavors may be more likely to be able to adequately cope with the adversity associated with being a professional football player. While Humara explicitly states that ability to cope with stress contributes to performance, Griffith uses the terms ‘fight’ and ‘mental resolve’ as physical and psychological constructs of coping with adversity.

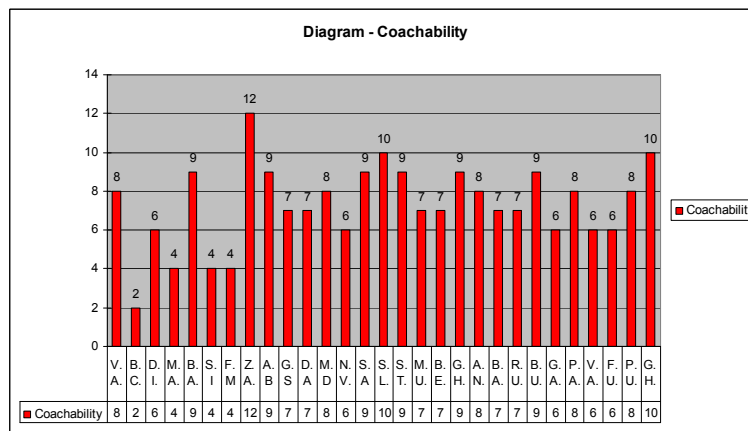


Figure 3. Diagram – Coachability scores accomplished by the football players

Coach-ability - Openness to constructive criticism given by a coach and/or manager.

When we analyze the football players from our study on coach-ability skill we can see that only 9 of them have a high score (9-12) at this factor and 9 of them have low scores (2-6) and 11 of them the scored average (7-8). (Figure 3) Medium scores obtain in coach-ability is 7,13 – an average to low

score which determine us to say that the football players are not open to criticism and could have problems on the relationship with the coach. This aspect could lead the team to failure and not reaching their potential in competition and practice as well.

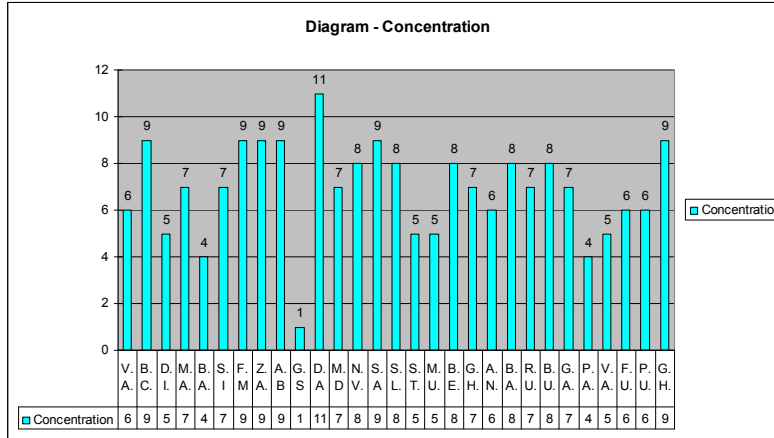


Figure 4. Diagram – Concentration scores accomplished by the football players

Concentration - The ability to focus on relevant cues in the sport environment.

When we analyze the concentration of football players from our study we can see that only 7 of them have a high score (9-12) at this factor and 11 of them have low scores (1-6) and 11 of them the scored average (7-8). (Figure 4) Medium scores

obtain in concentration is 6.89 –low score which determine us to say that the football players are having trouble concentrating at the relevant cues of the game in competition. This aspect could lead the team to failure and not reaching their potential in competition and practice as well.

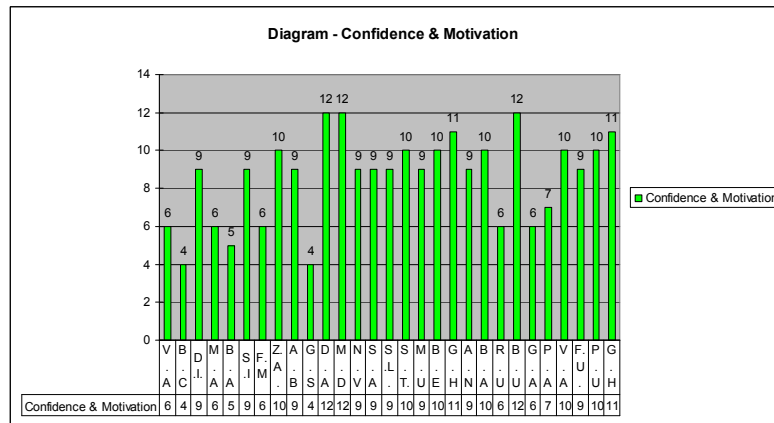


Figure 5. Diagram – Confidence & Motivation scores accomplished by the football players

Confidence and achievement motivation - A high self-efficacy and a striving to reach that potential. When we analyze the confidence and motivation of football players from our study we can see that only 20 of them have a high score (9-12) at this factor and 8 of them have low scores (4-6) and only one football player scored average (7). (Figure 5)

Medium scores obtain in confidence and motivation is 8.58 – average to high score which determine us to say that the football players are confident in them self and strive to reach their potential. This aspect could lead the team to success and not reaching their potential in competition.

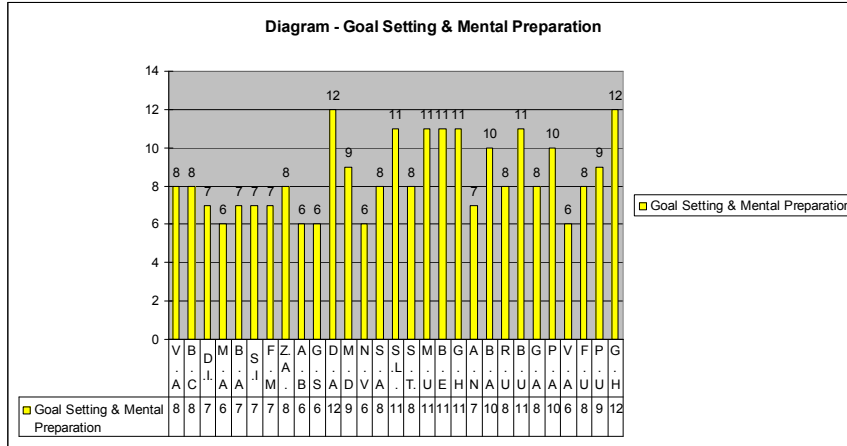


Figure 6. Diagram – Goal setting & Mental Preparation scores accomplished by the football players

Goal setting/mental preparation - The use of goal setting and mental preparation on a consistent basis to prepare for competition and/or practice. When we analyze the goal setting and mental preparation of football players from our study we can see that only 11 of them have a high score (9-12) at this factor and 5 of them have low scores (4-

6) and only 13 football players scored average (7-8). (Figure 6). Medium scores obtain in goal setting and mental preparation is 8,48 – average to high score which determine us to say that the football players are using mental preparation on a average degree and are setting goals for them self in competitions and practice lessons.

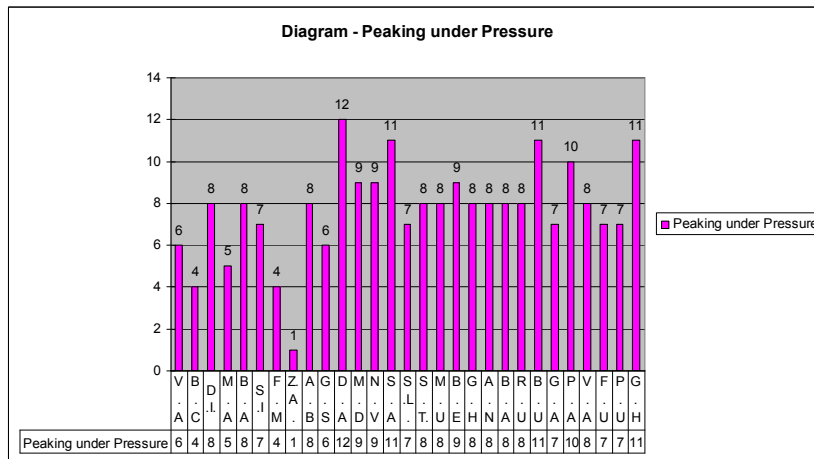


Figure 7. Diagram – Peaking under Pressure scores accomplished by the football players

Peaking under pressure - The ability to maintain performance in high pressure situations. When we analyze the peaking under pressure of football players from our study we can see that only 8 of them have a high score (9-12) at this factor and 6 of them have low scores (1-6) and only 15 football players scored average (7-8). (Figure 7).

Medium scores obtain in peaking under pressure is 7.68 – average score which determine us to say that the football players are able to maintain performance in high pressure situations just in some competition and that their ability can be constant. This aspect could lead the team to success or failure in competition on a 50-50 score.

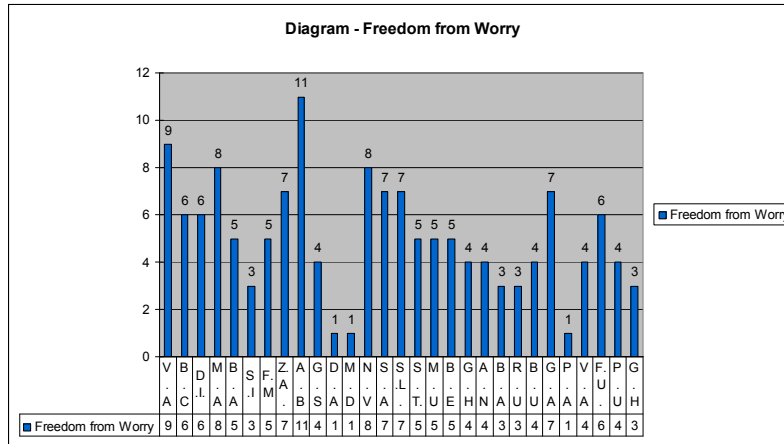


Figure 8. Diagram – freedom from worry scores accomplished by the football players

Freedom from worry- The absence of a fear or failure during and/or prior to a performance. When we analyze the freedom from worry skill of football players from our study we can see that only 2 of them have a high score (9-12) at this factor and 21 of them have low scores (1-6) and only 6 football players scored average (7-8). (Figure 8). Medium scores obtain in peaking under pressure is 5.03 – a low score which determine us to say that the football players are not free from worry in competition. This psychological skill of football players, freedom from worry is their biggest weakness. This aspect could lead the team to failure in competition and can explain the low score obtained also in concentration.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The implications of these findings for coaches, recruiters, and sport psychologists are positive. They can see the weakness and strength of the players in term of psychological skills and work from there on or choose to get on their team the best possible player.

In terms of weaknesses we can conclude that from our study we could identify 2-3 psychological coping skill on the football players, freedom from worry is their biggest weakness, concentration which can be easily linked with worrying and the third weakness is coping with adversity. This aspect could lead the team to failure in competition and can explain the low score obtained also in concentration.

The coach or the sport psychologist can teach an athlete how to effectively cope with adversity. Weinberg & Gould (2003) state in one of their studies that implementing pressure situations in a practice context as a coping strategy is often utilized by elite athletes. They state also that as you become more acclimated to deal with the adversity

in practice, you may be less likely to be affected by it in performance situations.

This strategy is most effective when the practice situation accurately resembles the performance stressors. However, athletes who have actually experienced these situations may be best prepared to cope with the adversity.

In terms of strengths we can conclude that from our study we could identify 2-3 psychological coping skill on the football players, confidence and motivation is their biggest strength, followed by goal setting and mental preparation and the third skill is coach-ability.

Once we have the strengths and the weaknesses of football players listed, coaches can begin to use this list to help create opportunities to capitalize on the players strengths and to compensate or improve on their weaknesses.

Research literature highlights three areas that impact an athlete’s self-confidence: achievement, self-regulation, and social climate (Vealey, 2000). It should be no surprise that in these situations, over time, these areas are also the keys to gaining self-confidence. Achievements can be used to enhance self-confidence by demonstrating physical ability and mastering the skills needed to “do the job” athletically. Self-regulation includes the ability to manage one’s behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in competitions and trainings. Techniques such as goal-setting, imagery, and self-talk can be used to both improve athletic performance and enhance self-confidence.

In conclusion we want to highlight that with this type of knowledge, football coaches can exert more control over their players preparation and performance in competitions and training. And for more information about psychological skills and ways of mental training in general or about specific strategies for football competitions, coaches should work in relationship with a sport psychologist.

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STUDY REGARDING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE LENGTH OF THE EXTREMITIES (INFERIORS-SUPERIORS) AND THE EXECUTION TECHNIQUE OF THROWING TO THE BASKET FROM DRIBBLING WITHIN THE COURSE OF BASKETBALL

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Abstract

This article answers objectively to if there is a relation between the efficiency of throwing to the basket from dribbling technical execution and the length of extremities (superiors – inferiors) of students, who are evaluated at the end of the basic course.

Keywords: *throwing to the basket from dribbling, students, upper limbs, legs, basketball and basic course.*

INTRODUCTION

In basketball most experts believe that height as well as other anthropometric parameters has a dominant role for playing basketball. The selection aims to detect the persons falling within the superior limits, takes place according to certain criteria and tests, among others, the somatic test. It sets the overall physical development and the parameters necessary to obtain favorable results in the game of basketball, and the method is called somatometry (anthropometry). Measurements made using the method aim to determine in particular lengths, perimeters, diameters of body segments: length of upper limbs, lower limbs, palm length, etc.

Studies similar to the problem proposed by this research have been carried out by the authors S. Miller R. Bartlett (1996), A. S. Sisodiya, M. Yadav (2010) who determined the relation between the anthropometric measurements and the ability to play basketball (Jonshon basketball test).

O.L. Dominic (2006) studied the relationship between the length of different parts of the body

and the capacity to shoot of Kwara States team players (Nigeria) and found out that there were no significant differences. According to the calculations made, there is no body segment to contribute independently to effecting the movement of throwing but their integration, coordination in sequential combinations ensure good muscle control.

O. Dean, (2004) believes that height is more important to successful offensive actions compared with the actions of defense.

The throwing at basket is the technical element benefiting from most attention in the learning process in all categories of training. This requires precision in execution and therefore personal responsibility. The literature recommends a number of somatic criteria required for a basketball player (T. Predescu, A.D. Moanță, 2001; D. Berceanu, A.D. Moanță et al., 2007, etc.). In many cases there is confusion about these parameters (somatic, motive, psychological, etc.) which certainly influence the effectiveness of execution of the