

Youngsters' rights and sport

PANATHLON
BOOKLETS

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Youngsters' rights and sport

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of Panathlon

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V.le G. Maggio, 6
16035 Rapallo (GE) - Italy

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Introduction

by Antonio Spallino

The Avignon Congress, the tenth in the history of Panathlon International, can be considered as the first of a new series, if its model will be reproduced with the same rigour and efficacy in the next meetings.

The exemplary organisation by the neonate local Club, directed by André Ferren, Jean Presset and Lucio Bizzini, radically changed the ordinary **routine** of all or almost all associations, by **letting facts speak out**. In other words the work done by a significant number of Clubs and resulting from the debate held during the previous year to discuss, verify and test the lines of **action** indicated in the preliminary report by Prof. Lucio Bizzini to the Presidents at the General Assembly held in Rapallo in 1994. This work guaranteed a concrete and effective debate in which, after the papers on the different sectors, the participants took part under the guide of the “co-ordinators” divided into different rooms according to the various cultural and language components present within Panathlon International.

The original works were so exhaustive - and this proves the current development of our movement - that it was not possible to publish them integrally. They were therefore summarised to preserve their substantial contents and to circulate them inside the whole movement.

One of the objectives of this “Booklet” is to make sure that these proceedings are known and discussed within the Clubs and taken as a basis for the commitment **every panathlete**, and not just every Club, has to **individually make in his own territory**. Simply by reading the final resolution one can see the enormous opportunities offered to “men of goodwill” who wish to defend youngsters’ sporting rights.

By protecting youngsters we will help build a society more careful about the values of humanism, more prone to tolerance and to respect personalities, able of revealing youngsters a moti-

vated “sense of life”.

To those who should object that our proposals live on an utopian island, we reply first of all, that the mainland of sporting organisations, though oppressed by conditionings and unacceptable suggestions, has already given signs of reflection and is keeping a distance, at least from early competitions, and from past and current excesses damaging youngsters. In France, for example, the latest book by Prof. Jacques Personne, speaker at our congress, documents that in the last ten years some sports federations have started suppressing or limiting the number of competitions for younger athletes. We asked our Governors from the other Districts to verify the behaviour of sports federations in their nations, in the last decade, and to follow its evolution, in order to examine, praise or denounce it.

Although Panathlon International covers all sports disciplines at all levels of the competitive, managerial and cultural commitment in sport, it is absolutely free from any economic, chauvinistic and publicity subjection. This is a rare privilege. Our Clubs and Districts should take advantage of the broad horizon that characterises us and should transmit to families, schools, sports clubs and federations the principles approved in Avignon.

We wish to inform those who should discourage us from aiming at this goal, by objecting that this challenge is too great for our forces, that **we are not alone**. Though disquieting it might appear, we are not isolated in our aim. We are moving along the same guidelines privileged by UNESCO, and in Europe we share the same position taken by the 8th Conference of the European Sports Ministers, held in Lisbon in 1995. Other organisations are joining us. While this “Booklet” is being published, the International Association Sport and Law informs that its fourth Congress, to be held in Antwerp next November will be devoted to exactly the same topic: “Youngsters’ rights and sport”.

These **facts** do not need any comment; their **aims** pressingly and movingly pour out from the following pages.

Children's Sporting Rights

by *Lucio Bizzini*

The aim of my paper is to discuss children's and youngsters' sports practice, on the one hand, in physiological, and moreover psychological terms, and on the other to evaluate how organised sport meets growth realities. This two-fold objective was the core element of the movement we launched in Geneva in 1988 and that we called **children's sporting rights**. I would like to take the opportunity to present a brief overview of this movement.

I first of all wish to define the child's psychological development, therefore between age 7 and 11, and the youngsters' development, between age 11 and 14. The charter for children's sporting rights is aimed exactly at these age groups.

Let us rapidly recall some physiological elements: a child from 7 to 11 doesn't know what resting or limiting him/herself means, he is generous, he gives all of himself without realising that his physical strength is limited. The bone structure and muscle strength, not yet fully developed, are in contrast with the harmony of body proportions, which give him/her elegance and co-ordination.

From a psychological point of view, children are concrete, theirs is an orderly world, their behaviour is spontaneous, their representation of reality is simple. Motivations are clear and essentially influenced by external factors. At this age they will start practising a sport because their father, friend or TV star practises it. Just as easily they will abandon this sport, disappointing their adult or parents, who will come to the conclusion that it is due to a lack of will or assiduity. But for children this is an occasion for discovering and testing their motory abilities and different situations, it is an important and essential basis for their future specialised and intensive sports practice.

It is the ideal age for developing motory skills and it is therefore correct to teach them the largest possible number of sports. If these abilities may be based on "primitive" motory experience and knowledge acquired during the first years of life, and therefore before starting sports training, they will be even more effective, as they are based on their own experience, initiatives, in different conditions and with a spirit of adventure and curiosity (as shown by an investigation by Marte and Notarnicola.)

A child aged between 7 and 11 is also a poet, a dreamer, sometimes he is also defined as “careless” or as constantly “day dreaming”, like a goalkeeper who at the very moment he has to pay attention to a dangerous attack from the adversary team, diverts his attention to an helicopter, passing close by. (Example of concentration). His space-time knowledge is still incomplete, his tactics, as well as his anticipation and expectation abilities are still limited. As for the motivations, a child practises a sport to emulate his friends, relatives or idols; it is more or less when he is eleven that motivations are interiorized (pleasure, progress, interest in competition, fitness.) I would therefore suggest that up to the age of eleven/twelve years the emphasis should be on multidisciplinary and on learning different sporting skills; early intensive training should be avoided (but in such sports as gymnastics, skating or swimming, this is more difficult).

From a physical point of view, a youngster from 11 to 14 years, is going through a delicate phase of growth: the ratio between bone and muscle structure seems all of a sudden unbalanced, it is the age characterised by long arms and legs, disproportionate bodies, affecting the elegance of gesture.

Youngsters gradually discover abstract thinking, and all its advantages with respect to prior knowledge, which was still based on the object present here and now. He can now apply the different cognitive tools (perception, memory, logic reasoning, attention, concentration) for a longer period of time, in a better way and with less difficulties. He is eager to progress, and there is favourable ground for learning; he is curious, generous, also in his effort to adapt to novelties. He is naturally demanding, both of himself and of others, he expects to acquire new experience, enriching his knowledge. he no longer wants to follow others, he wants to propose, provoke, grow.

At this age youngsters are particularly sensitive, impatient to find their place in society. Furthermore, their sense of friendship reaches its peak; young people see the group as a place to realise and assert themselves, but also where they can be protected and understood.

Sport is for him/her perhaps the first occasion for experiencing investment in an affective and cognitive autonomous space. Motivations to sports practice, so far essentially dominated by parental, family or social incentives are interiorized and become more personal: they derive from the wish to progress, the pleasure experienced in sports, the

desire to confront oneself with the others. The interiorization process favours a youngster's new experiences, no longer under the guide (or the authority) of an adult, but in contact with him/her, in our case the coach, with whom a new collaboration is started, leading the youngster to acquire increased motory, tactical, mental, social and moral skills.

The charter for children's sporting rights is based essentially on data provided by sports sciences (sports medicine, sports psychology, sports pedagogy), and indicated by their constant progress of the last twenty years.

The charter for children's sporting rights

- The right to practise sports
- The right to enjoy oneself and play
- The right to benefit from a sound environment
- The right to be treated with dignity
- The right to be surrounded and trained by competent persons
- The right to attend training sessions adequate to individual rhythms
- The right to compete with young people having the same opportunity of success
- The right to participate in adequate competitions
- The right to practise one's sport in absolutely safe conditions
- The right to have resting periods
- The right not to be a champion

Physical activity and sport are therefore children and youngsters' privileged means of **exploration** and **knowledge**. Sport (from the French "deport") means entertainment; top level athletes don't disdain the deep pleasure they take in practising sports. Intrinsic motivations, such as pleasure and the desire to progress are present up to the famous extra year, when the competitor is no longer supported by sufficient motivations, and ends his/her career anonymously. For a young person, "victories and records do not represent the deepest meaning of sport, while enrichment, satisfaction and improvement of oneself are the leading elements offered by sport."

During the first years of practice, sport should represent an experience of pleasure and progress.

Exasperated competition and excessive monodisciplinary activity before 13/14 years of age (a lot depends on the type of sport), do not favour the growth of the learning sporter; on the contrary they increase the risk of abandoning this practice. The youngster's world is different from that of an adult, he/she needs models, infrastructures and competitions different from those of the adult in order for

him to progress, in other words, we have to respect his world. It is worth remembering that, as R. Martens stresses, “if joy and sadness in sport are synonyms of victory and defeat, this is essentially due to the adult’s influence.”

Starting from these principles we can therefore establish a sporting psycho-pedagogic ideology based on conformance with **development rhythms**, adaptation of **competitions and infrastructures** favouring **multi-disciplinary practice**.

Presenting the different articles of **the charter for children’s sporting rights** is the right opportunity for providing both positive and negative examples on the approach proposed by the adult to the young sporter.

1) The right to practise sports: with no distinction of any kind (sex, skill, physical features), every youngster wanting to practise a sport, should be able to do so in any sports club (+ve E: swimming clubs and non-competitive groups; -ve E: children relegated for several minutes on benches in collective sports)

2) The right to enjoy oneself and play: in the way youngsters between the age of 7 and 14 enjoy themselves and play. For example when we observe 11 year olds playing soccer, they invent rules and special forms of competition, often lasting a whole afternoon, alternated with other activities, irrespective of whether they are sporting activities or not (cycling, board-games, fishing, etc.) This outlines the need to change, to create different conditions, proposing alternative games and encouraging these spontaneous practices.

3) The right to benefit from a sound environment: this is an important issue today; investigations indicate that it is not sufficient to practise a sport in order to be safeguarded from drug addiction (current doping issues prove the contrary). It is up to the adult (coach or manager) to educate youngsters to reach physical and psychological well-being from sport, it is up to the adult to introduce, as soon as possible, such notions as fair play. (+ve E: show sporting attitudes; -ve E: the hostile behaviour of a young coach towards referees.)

4) The right to be treated with dignity: too often we still see that in daily practice, on the field, just outside the field, in the changing rooms, old evils reappear, such as those of a “hard” school, or coarse language, in contrast with good education rules.

All these attitudes do not favour the educational and sporting process. Sport in this case is seen as a source of frustration and delusion, and lacks respect for others.

5) The right to be surrounded and trained by competent persons: the coach-educator working with youths must integrate psycho-pedagogic knowledge and technical teaching adapting it to youngsters' reality. Technicians-educators should fix the didactic bases, provide their contents, suggest adequate methods. Often, however, less competent trainers are assigned very young athletes: they are very keen but lack training and make mistakes that will often affect the youngster's future sporting life. Other coaches use, for example, pre-game "theories", true copies of those used for adults, therefore inadequate for young people. Let us remember that around fifteen years of age about 50% of youngsters abandon their competitive sport, and what's worse, 10% of them will never practise any sport again.

6) The right to attend training sessions adequate to individual rhythms: it is not only a matter of following ontogenesis (the general development) but also and, more important, the personal growth. Everyone of us has its learning pace. (-ve E: those who have difficulties in mathematics), and this must absolutely be taken into consideration to potentiate capabilities and avoid training level errors. Coaches' or educators' training must provide precise data on growth features and on how this can be put into practice.

7) The right to compete with young people having the same opportunity of success: too often we still see competitions where the level between opponents is too diversified, therefore they do not represent a positive contribution to the sporting experience. I personally saw a soccer match ending 22 to 0; I read somewhere that an ice hockey match ended with the score 55 to 0, in tennis clubs too often we still see contests between children and adults. It is certainly interesting and educational to experience defeat, from which useful teaching can be derived; but feeling helpless or omnipotent is of no use.

8) The right to participate in adequate competitions: competitions are often organised according to adult standards (championships, sudden death tournaments, distance to run, champion titles for young people.) There are also positive examples of adaptation: 7 team-members soccer, mini-bas-

ketball, mini-volleyball, etc., one-day tournaments.)

9) The right to practise one's sport in absolutely safe conditions: there is a problem therefore of adapting infrastructures, which often don't take into due consideration the child's or youngster's physical and psychical reality (size of field, gym equipment, ski gates.) There are also positive examples such as proper ice surface, climbing walls, non-structured playing areas.

10) The right to have resting periods: too often in organised sport, particularly in what we call early intensive training (more than 10 hours a week for athletes belonging to the 7 to 14 age group), holidays are used to attend training camps, not allowing the students to rest as required.

11) The right not to be a champion: but also the right to be a champion. It is important to say that at the end of the first years of sports practice, in all cases more or less up to 15 years of age, youngsters have understood that competing is joyful confrontation, understanding oneself, testing one's abilities and confronting them with others (competing = exploring together.) On this basis the youngster will be able to intensify sports practice if he/she wishes or has talent, or may continue practising sports during leisure time.

The psycho-pedagogic ideology on which the Charter for children's sporting rights is based wants to ensure a sporting education respecting young people's needs. Originated in Geneva, thanks to a group of coaches and experts in childhood and adolescence, all those who observe it have to undertake to practice and promote sports centred on the youngster rather than on the result. The charter for children's sporting rights, based on recent data from the field of medicine, psychology and pedagogy, in relation to practice by youngsters up to the age of 14, aims at promoting multi-disciplinary practice (broadening the motor experience), at adapting the organisation of the competition (avoid copying tournaments or championships suitable for adults), at conforming to individual learning paces (avoiding early selection), at considering the fundamental changes linked to puberty (often leading to temporary motor regressions), and at considering that youngsters are not yet fully grown.

Conclusion

This paper had been presented at the Rapallo Assembly in June 1994

The ideal age to start practising competitive sports

by João Alberto Carazzato

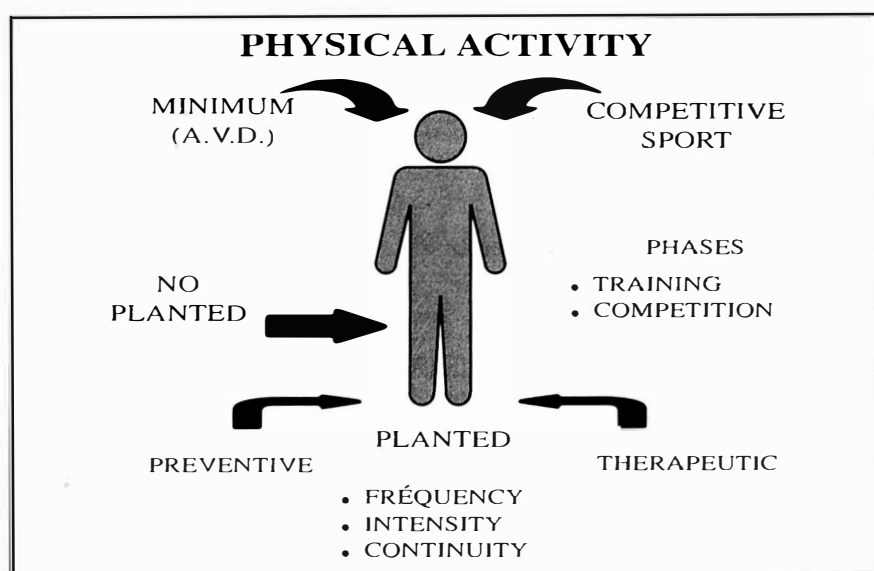
Physical activity is essential for human beings alongside with working, studying, nutrition and resting.

But physical activity must be adapted to individual needs.

Unscheduled physical activity such as a soccer match or a tennis or golf game are not as beneficial as minimal, every-day scheduled physical activities, i.e. activities planned according to individual intensity and continuity.

There is also a scheduled physical activity allowing athletes to reach their top performance when their organisms undergo extreme efforts which are close to exhaustion.

It is this kind of competitive sporting activity which causes most concern mainly because the quest for records and victories leads many people to go beyond their physiological limits (chart 1).



This is not the case of the adult top-level athlete who profits from the progress in sports medicine which allow him/her to excel within the limits of his/her organic condition. Young athletes are those who require more attention, especially those youngsters who start intensive training at an increasingly younger age.

After registering the sharp drop in the average age of athletes competing in the Barcelona Olympic Games (23 years for women and 25 for men) all sports medicine scholars and sports authorities started investigating into this phenomenon in order to evaluate it.

The ‘warning signal’ launched by P.I. in this Congress stressed once again our movement’s pioneering spirit. Before discussing the problem of early competition training, it is necessary to make some introductory remarks. First of all by examining the human beings’ stages of development which can be divided into four major age groups : 0 - 1 year; 1 - 6 years; 6 - 12 years; 12 - 18 years.

During the **First Stage**, which we will refer to as “knowledge”, we can observe four neurological patterns, and precisely:

First Flexing Pattern

The child has flexed knees and hips; the fetal position of the pregnancy stage is common in newborns up to their third month of life.

First Extension Pattern

It includes all reflex activities common to children from 3 to 5 months, and during which the baby, in an extended position, grasps the thumb which is offered to him/her and holds it in a reflex way.

Second Flexing Pattern

It is the stage during which the flexor muscles of the hip and knee start working and allow the six-month-old child to sit up.

Second and Final Extension Pattern

It occurs between the tenth and twelfth month of age when the child uses the ‘anti gravitational muscles’ to stand up and walk.

Second Stage (1-6 years). It is the stage during which the neuropsychomotor development is completed and the final motory co-ordination is determined, that is “walking”, “running”, “fall-

ing”, “throwing”, “catching”.

Third Stage (6-12 years) It is the growth stage. The simultaneous development of the organism, bones, muscles, psyche, and mind.

Fourth Stage (12-18 years) It is the final development pattern of the human being.

We think that the physical activities described in the following paragraphs are suitable for the above mentioned stages.

First Stage (0-1 year)

Psychomotory activities, teaching of preferred positions, becoming familiar with water, ground, and air.

Second Stage (1-6 years)

Development of physical and mental abilities in every-day activities, feeling the pleasure of exercising; developing a suitable time-schedule, feeling the sun, air, water and ground; developing skills; taking courage.

Third Stage (6-12 years)

Start attending sports schools to get acquainted with various sports activities. At ten it is possible to choose a specific activity: gymnastics, swimming, running and jumping.

Fourth Stage (12-18 years)

It is possible to start practising sports at competitive level to finally improve “motory co-ordination”, “flexibility”, “elasticity”, “speed”, “strength”, “resistance” and “endurance”.

**Recreational
or
competitive
physical
activity?**

When physical activity becomes a necessity, it is time to choose how to practice it: as a “recreational” or “competitive” activity? It doesn’t matter which you chose, the important is to select an activity. We believe “competitive sports” are a better choice because they train the individual for his/her future life.

Competitive sports intensely develop the body but must be practised by perfectly dosing performance and benefits, because “too little” or “too much” practice is not beneficial. In recreational sports the individual wants to overcome a lack of skills. The ideal situation is that of

practising competitive sports to develop some skills and alternate them with recreational sports to overcome inabilities, but the type of sport and age must be correctly chosen .

In order to choose the right age, four aspects have to be considered: 1) sex; 2) the type of sport; 3) duration; 4) top sporting performance.

As far as sex is concerned we know that puberty occurs in women earlier than in men, and girls can therefore start practising a competitive sport earlier. But women retire earlier and have a shorter total practising period. In addition it is well known that thanks to male hormones, the main protagonists in strength development and muscular power, the results obtained by women are almost always inferior to men's results. Women have less choice, in fact there are few sports in which women can excel: rhythmic gymnastics, synchronised swimming, and some equestrian sports.

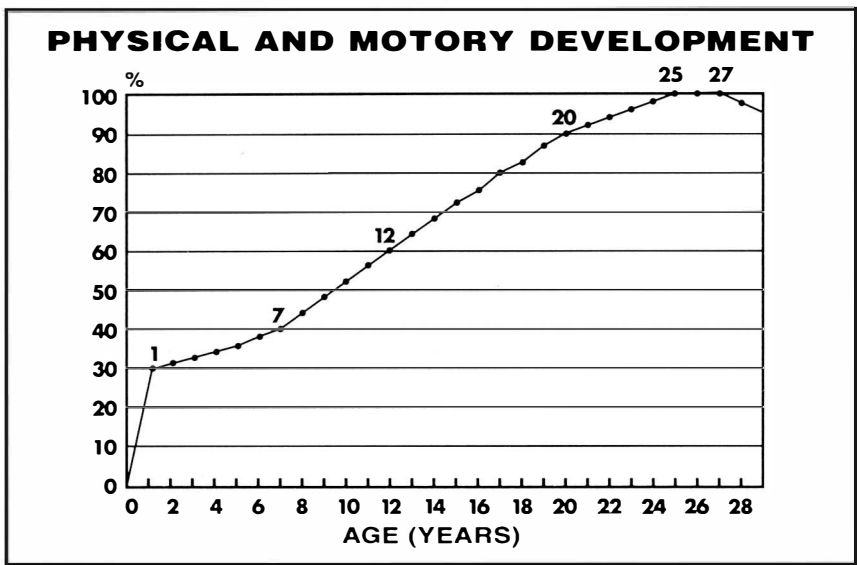
In examining **“the type of sport”** we must consider two points: “practising time” and “physical efforts”. As far as the first is concerned there are long-performance sports (early start and late retirement), short-performance sports (late start and early retirement) and average-performance sports where the two stages overlap. As far as physical efforts are concerned these must be considered according to three aspects: cardio-circulatory, mental, and locomotory. The child's heart must not undergo intense and continuous efforts in order to avoid an unbalanced development of heart size, wall thickness, heart cavities and contractility. An example of a sport which is not suitable for children under 12 years of age is junior soccer because it requires quick and constant movements. Sports involving apnea (weight lifting and some kinds of wrestling) must be avoided because they might cause arterial hypertension. As far as psychological stimuli are concerned, it is wrong to push children to “win”, “attack” and “be attacked”, or to scold or praise them excessively as technical managers, parents or sports managers sometimes do. Osteomioarticular damages are the most severe risks involved in early and inadequate sports practice. When muscles undergo intense, early, and inadequate efforts they become hypertroph-

ic and they may retract and cause bone compression and articular unbalances. One-sided sports (i.e. tennis, fencing and soccer, where one side of the body is mainly involved), may cause developmental problems caused by inadequate muscular pressure (causing shorter length and greater thickness in the dominating sides). Unbalanced muscular hypertrophy may cause an unbalanced condition of the working and resting muscles resulting in deformities and walking defects. Therefore a good balance in the development of strength and elasticity without compromising flexibility is fundamental. In addition to growth cartilage damage, growth nuclei damage can occur causing osteochondritis and deformities which, added to 'stress' bone fractures present an obscure, undesirable picture. We know that the articular cartilage is a genetic heritage which is developed from birth to adolescence and which must not be precociously destroyed by intense use and inappropriate consumption due to sports practice.

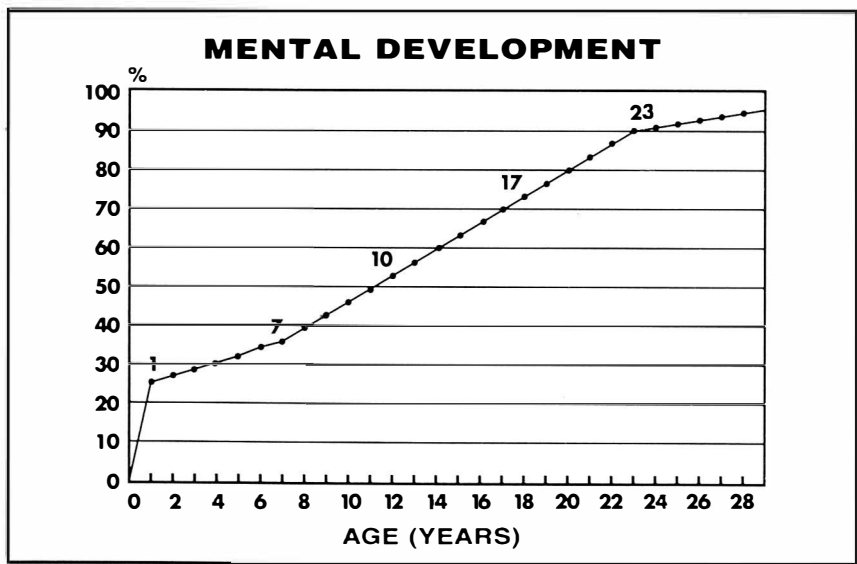
As far as "**duration**" is concerned we know that our body is like a machine: if correctly used it can be unaffected for many years, but if wrongly exploited it quickly expires and exhausts its durability. Practising top level competitive sports requires training and competitions close to exhaustion which compromise the average duration. If "some sports can be practised for an 'x' number of years", it is easy to understand why a sport offering a fifteen years duration, for example, is forbidden to 24 year old athletes, who started practising it when they were 8, and also athletes who started practising competitive sports when they were 12 years old, retire when they are only 28.

"**Top sporting performance**", considered the 'maximum performance' of the athlete, when he or she breaks records and has the best victories, can be characterised by the maximum development of the physical-motory, mental and technical factor. The first occurs according to a curve where a 30% gain is obtained during the first year of life, 10% during the following six years, 20% from seven to twelve, 30% from

twelve to twenty and the remaining 10% from 25 years of age, when the man's top physical and motory condition occur lasting until 27 years of age. (Chart 2).

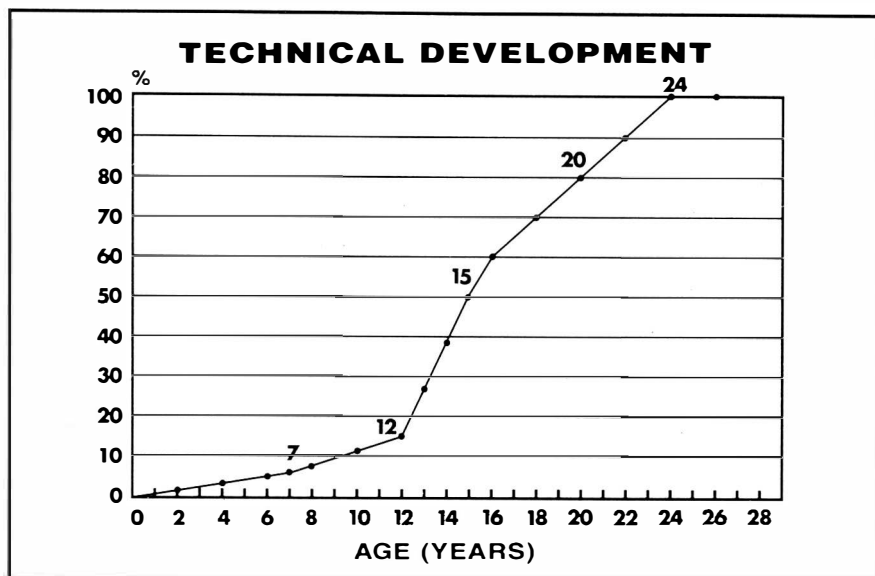


25% of *mental* development occurs during the first year of life, 10% during the following six years, 20% from seven to twelve, 20% from twelve to seventeen, 20% from seventeen to twenty-three and the remaining 5% from twenty-three onwards (Chart 3).

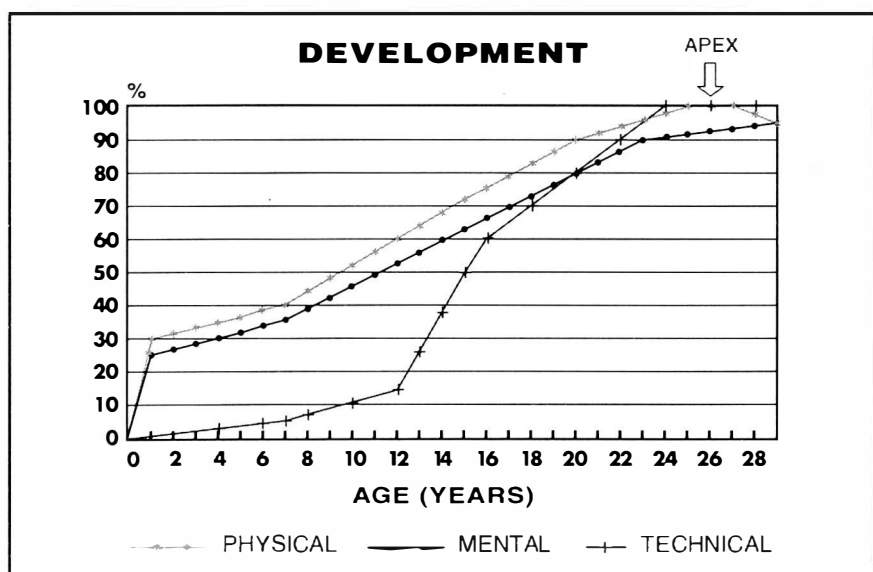


Technical development is considered from the average of various sports (swimming and gymnastics require an early start and early retirement, cross-country and weight lifting disciplines are started and ended at an older age). during the first seven years only 5% of the potential is developed, 10% from seven to twelve. 40% from twelve to sixteen, 30% from sixteen

to twenty, 15% from twenty to twenty-four, when top performance is reached (Chart 4).



By superimposing the three charts we obtain a fourth chart where we can observe that the common top performance condition, when top results are reached, is at about 26 years of age, as an average taken from all the different sports (when analysing only technical aspects). The smaller value (25) is related to women and the higher value (27) is related to men (Chart 5).



However, today some new elements are changing the parameters of calculation of these top performance conditions. In fact the early practice of competitive sports causes the following: motory development occurs earlier and the locomotory structure is compromised at an early age, top performance is not achieved and only 30% of its potential is reached. The mental de-

velopment chart, too, undergoes some damage because “early professionalization jeopardises a student’s development by preventing him from reaching the desired top mental and intellectual condition”, and, eventually, also the technical development chart is anticipated although top level conditions are reached. This means reaching top level conditions earlier, but at a lower skill level compared to what was reached until today. In conclusion a lower top performance increasingly reduces the possibility of attaining big achievements because of an early competitive sports practice by young people.

We believe that, upon serious consideration of individual conditions, training should take place according to subsequent competition stages within the following age limits for the different sports, as hereinafter reported:

10 years

swimming, Olympic gymnastics;

12 years

volleyball, basketball, handball, athletics (jumping, running on short distances);

14 years

soccer, junior soccer, water polo, judo, athletics (throwing);

over 14 years

tennis, baseball, fencing (one-sided sports);

16 years

cross-country disciplines, weight lifting, wrestling (others).

Therefore:

0-1 year

preferred positions, psychomotricity, walking, swimming;

1-6 years

recreational activities, control over the environment;

6-12 years

sports school, swimming, gymnastics;

12-18 years

competitive sports to be selected appropriately and at the right age, if possible.

The responsibility of families in the sports practice of youngsters

by Robert Decker

In 1991 “Deutsche Sportjugend” - German sports youngsters - an organisation belonging to “Deutscher Sportbund” - the German sports federation - the most important German central sports board, organised in Osnabruck an important national congress with a provocative title: “Kinder brauchen Bewegung - Brauchen Kinder Sport?” (Youngsters need movement - do they need sports?).

One of the main organisers and speakers at this congress, Prof. Renate Zimmer wrote : “Bewegung ist mehr als Sport!” (Movement is more than sport!).

The above quotations are meant to introduce the importance of movement, of physical and body activities, of real experience, of life and ludic activities, of games in young people’s total development and education. Since birth, and maybe before, during pregnancy, children need movement and gestures. In children the fulfilment of their motory needs is as vital as the fulfilment of other primary or fundamental needs : their need for air, oxygen, food, sleep, and also the fulfilment of their need for love, affection. Some quotations from famous authors such as “From acts to thoughts” a book by Henry Wallon, or “The mental process is an interior act” (Jean Piaget), or “The child thinks with his/her muscles” (Michaux), stress the strong relationship and interaction between movement and psychism in children, two aspects, two facets of their personalities, of their indivisible psychosomatic unity.

“The child thinks with his/her muscles”. During their first years of life, up to the first years at school, nursery school and the first years of elementary school, children are essentially movement:

- by moving children test their motory skills and limits trying to go beyond them incessantly. By gradually mastering their bodies children acquire self-assurance and self-confidence necessary to gain independence;

- through movement children enjoy muscles, physical contact with the ground, with things and mates (physical world, materials, people);

- children in nursery school go on exploring their environment through movement and build, through the acquired experience, also the fundamental structures of their abstract thinking;

- the emotional interactions with adults and other children involved in movement are the more definite and comprehensible to the child. His/her emotions are, in fact, better expressed through body movement than with words as this means of expression is not sufficiently mastered by the child.

The motory activities of a mother bearing a child are very important for the child's development and are also a 'mirror' of that development. An unrestricted variety and diversity of movements during pregnancy stimulates the child to experience changes/modifications in space and time (upward, downward, left or right movements, changes in rhythm/time).

In small children all body experiences contribute to developing the brain. Lack of stimuli at this age can cause diseases - deficiencies, disorders - that will last all life long. Therefore parents should be actively involved, should help and cooperate in the motory education of their children. This help is also fundamental for merely physiological reasons: without many contacts, as varied as possible, of the child with his/her environment - holding, touching, putting objects in their mouth, tasting, feeling ... - there is no ground for future development of abstraction and creativity.

Mobility and the ability to use hands and fingers are the premise of eye and language perception's future development. (Kiphard).

The child's body skills and vitality as well as his motory fitness/condition influence his/her mental capacity, expression, communication, problem identification and solving ability, sensitivity, perception, friendship and socialising skills. Learning, response speed, the ability/faculty of paying attention and controlling, mastering him/herself depend on the child's body vitality and good motor condition.

Many psychosomatic disorders and diseases

could be avoided if human beings took care of their bodies as barometers of their health and if they developed a positive relationship with their bodies.

Parents must teach children how to manage and experience their own bodies.

Children have the gift, the faculty of expressing their feelings through their bodies - Kinder haben noch die Gabe, ihre Gefühle zu "Verkörpern" - Their bodies, as well as their hearts, express happiness, disappointment, sadness, suffering, pain, rage. The ability to express themselves, their emotions, feelings - Gemütsbewegungen - in a natural way through behaviour and movement is one of the premises, fundamental prerequisites to further physical and mental health. Maintaining this natural integration of body and mind for the future: this is one of the most important tasks of mental hygiene (Psychohygiene), and of elementary education centred on children and their health (eine kindgemäße und gesundheitsorientierte Elementarerziehung).

Until today we underestimated the fundamental importance of the lack of movement and its damaging effects on health and development of healthy children - krankmachende Bedeutung von Bewegungsmangel -.

Today we know that restrictions and limitations on early motory experiences are the main cause of most of the diseases treated by paediatricians. (Hartmut Kühl).

Movement at home, outside, in parks and so on, and later at nursery school, elementary school represent for children a motory free play, physical exploitation, a necessary means to satisfy their pressing motory needs. Physical activities and, later, sports activities favour motor and sports learning, the introduction and initiation into our "Bewegungskultur" - our motory and sports culture. In children as well as in adults movement and sports activities help acquiring, improving and maintaining "fitness" and through this good health. Finally movement and sports activities are for children a way of expressing and fulfilling themselves, of socialising, perhaps also to develop their intelligence. Children consider movement as play, inside, and this is often visible also by the outside world. Moving and playing are one and only thing for children. For them play is performance.

Being able to move, sit down, roll over, do somersaults, slide, shift, walk, run, jump, climb, throw, lift and hold, move on ice, water or

snow, all the above is perceived and experienced by children as a delivered and appreciated performance both by themselves and other people, first of all by parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, i.e. by all their relatives.

Movement, play and performance: these are the three key elements of sports and of every sporting activity.

This is the main role of parents and of the family as first and main party in charge of the development and blossoming of children's education: of motor education first, and later sports education. Parents and families must offer children what they need also in this fundamentally important field of their development, that is:

- A world, an environment they can approach, they can grasp and conquer with all their senses, they can understand and which offers them opportunities for significant global experiences.
- Areas to play and move, areas to explore and fill up with children's fancy.
- The time necessary to be intensively busy, to tackle and solve problems, to find solutions by themselves.
- Other children to play with, to fight and run wild with, and dare do something.
- Adults who devote time to children, who enjoy doing things with them and trust them enough to allow them to dare doing something.

Although motory games are not yet sporting activities, shifting from the former activity to the latter is not abrupt, but occurs gradually. A jump over a puddle leads to long jump, walking and balancing on a wall leads to exercising on a balance beam without abrupt changes, smoothly as a natural evolution.

While searching for "Ersatz" - a natural substitute to satisfy their movement needs, children face increasingly earlier an artificial motory world which is "sportful" and "educational". Today many children go to a gym since the age of 2 or 3 years, for example during jamboree sessions for mothers and children. Sport creates movement situations the child does not experience in everyday life. And during these sporting activities children meet other children, and together they can move and discover new ways of interacting. Parents and other "animators"-instructors of small children must not kill their spontaneity and movement creativity imprisoning them in an organised system which is a foe to creativity. Guided by their efficiency, adults

**Parents:
the first
initiators
and sports
educators of
children**

want to plan and schedule children's activities, but in doing so they kill all their initiatives and creativity. Adults, and first of all parents, must know that the smaller the child, the more he/she needs to play, explore, test, try, freely create without restrictions and does not need to do exercises, activities, games or movements which are imposed on him/her, ordered and commanded.

Therefore, if children need movement, sports and motor activities, these activities must be in relation to their needs and specific characteristics. Sport must suit a child and not vice-versa. A child must not be obliged to adapt him/herself to the requirements of a single sport, of its rules and regulations, codes, as is often the case unfortunately!

The role of families as sports initiators and educators of children is fundamental: practice of sports by parents first of all, and essentially the mothers' practice as a girl and young lady and as a woman bearing a child - swimming, walking, pre-natal gymnastics - are very important. These are followed, after the child's birth, by sporting activities like swimming in a sufficiently warm pool, practised by parents, mother, father or grandparents together with the child. As well as by movement games and others in the bedroom or in another room equipped for child and infant play. A garden with a grass field and multi-functional equipment as a porch with a rope to climb, a swing, a trapeze, rope climbing stairs..... is a privileged place for children's motory games. If it is not possible to have all the above at home, parents should take their children to city fields and equipped parks in residential areas. Walks in the woods, the natural big gyms and play grounds, in fields and areas suitable for running, jumping, climbing, struggling, and running will favour the acquisition of varied and different motory experience in a natural setting.

General principle: almost all everyday objects starting from furniture, chairs, tables, wooden floors, but also dolls, balloons, ropes, sticks, pieces of wood, magazines, towels and handkerchiefs, pieces of fabric, carpet, sheets, cardboard boxes, pillows, bags, wool, hoops can be used by children from 2 to 6/7 years as gymnastics equipment to play alone or with other children, to experience many movements and to educate themselves to movement in a simple, spontaneous, easy and direct way. A child's

world must also be his/her “Bewegungswelt”, the motory world!

Two points are essential. On the one hand it is necessary to give children, starting from a very early age, all incentives, invitations and stimuli to move by creating or adapting the necessary space and material conditions. Home is the first and most important motory area for children. It represents their everyday environment in which to live, play and move. It must therefore be equipped accordingly: the living area must be “kindgerecht” -fit for children’s needs - simple furniture, a couch, foam rubber, carpet, mattresses, blankets on the floor in order to move, roll over, crawl, climb, pull and push, straighten up, stand up, run, hop, jump, construct, swing.

On the other hand parents’ attitude towards movement and sports is even more important. Parents’ hobbies are a model for children. Some studies show that motory activities common to children and parents have very positive effects on children’s motor development. Parents’ attitude is essential in educating children to an autonomous, responsible behaviour. The family is the most important place for small children’s education and provides the basis for further education to autonomy. If adults interfere too early and too often in children’s experience and experiments, if they correct and advice them too early, children are diverted in their efforts to understand the world through their explorations. An open, positive attitude aimed at encouraging and reinforcing expectations by parents can help support children’s activities. On the contrary, a repressive attitude and lack of understanding for children’s needs might even lead them to be passive, discourage them and induce them to give up. Children must experience and control situations in order to gradually develop general mastering strategies they can transfer to different situations. Parents and educators must control themselves to avoid disturbing children’s playing activities. They must learn to respect children’s decisions in choosing those activities they consider important and meaningful. Adults can influence children’s play without even realising it. They can help and prevent, stop or encourage, rouse or repress, suppress.

Their intentions are often excellent: but they are not able to go back being children, to be ‘in their children’s shoes’, to see the world through a child’s eyes.

As children grow up together with everyday activities at home they go on outings with their parents when they are free, on week-ends, bicycle or walking trips to the countryside, to the mountains, near rivers, natural or artificial lakes, sea..... and also vacations in the countryside, mountains, at the seaside, in an environment which favours physical activities and sports mainly for children but also for adults.

When children start attending nursery school or kindergarten, parents must be involved in their community social life: they enrol their child in a sports or gymnastics club offering small children's activities, they actively take part in sports and ludic events organised by nursery schools, elementary schools together with parents associations, they take part in after school activities: school sports clubs or school sports associations, or local sports clubs in their area, in their city. They enrol their child, regularly take him / her there and, if possible, volunteer as escorts, animators, managers. All this obviously requires, on behalf of parents and/or grandparents, interest, a positive attitude, availability, time and commitment to their children and/or grandchildren.

In this vast field the often mentioned principle of support is truly valid: as parents it is important to take part in social life, show interest, involvement, active participation, help according to one's own means and competence, in order to ensure that social activities, opportunities, facilities favouring the village, district, or city social life, are real, rich, diverse, and able to welcome not only some adults and adolescents who are at the top of their sporting abilities, but also, and above all, those who need them most, starting from children.

As children grow up parents should continue to be involved in their leisure time. Parents should set an example for their children by practising sports and encouraging them to practice physical and sports activities which better meet their interests and means. Parents should help, stimulate, "train" and "support" children in their physical activities and sports without pushing or forcing them, without imposing on them the choice of a sport simply to satisfy their own vanity.

This interest in their children's activities involves criticism, family discussions on dangers implied in a sport when it is not understood and wrongly practised. Excesses in sports, unilateral or

excessive practice, the exaggerations and extravagances of sports-show, its dangers for the moral and physical health of those who practice it, essentially young people, must be analysed and discussed within the family.

In a world which is increasingly influenced by the media, parents are the main responsible party in children's education and must not be simple spectators, passive consumers but must develop at the same time a critic and alert attitude in order to help their children find their own way, and teach them to tell good from bad also in sports.

Before ending my lecture I want to mention two surveys. The first was carried out by a sports magazine some years ago in Federal Germany by interviewing top level athletes on who contributed mostly to their success.

Almost unanimously the great majority of the people interviewed answered that they owe their sports success essentially to their parents. Unfortunately we have also parents who, animated by a great vanity, egoism and unfulfilled ambition pushed or even forced their children to pursue an impossible sports career leading them not simply to sports failure but to an overall failure.

The second survey realised from November 1994 to March 1995 by two of my students at the Luxembourg Higher Institute for Pedagogical Studies and Research, interviewed the students of 46 elementary school classes, 740 young people aged from 9 to 11, on their interest in sports and physical education in schools and sports practice in general.

The interview included the following question : "Do your parents practice sports?" - From the answers gathered it resulted that if parents regularly practice sports, 80% of youngsters belong to a sports club. This figure drops to 63% if parents occasionally practice sports, and below 50% among those youngsters whose parents do not practice any sport. Parents' sports behaviour greatly influences their children's behaviour towards sports. The answer could also be differently explained: "The more parents are involved in sports, the less children remain outside sports clubs". Among the families where parents regularly practice sports, only 19% of young people do not join sports clubs, where parents occasionally practice sports, the figure of children not belonging to sports clubs is 33% and it reaches 44% if parents never practice sports.

It is therefore clear that parents' behaviour greatly influences children's behaviour and habits as far as sports practice is concerned.

Parents play a fundamental role in sports as well as in all training and education fields.

We, as Panathletes, must help parents understand the great importance of movement, games, physical and sports activities for the full development of their children's personality. It is our duty to help them effectively face their big responsibilities in this important field of children's education.

The implementation of the Charter for Children's Sporting Rights, begins in the family, and implies the above said.

Sport and School

by Bruno Grandi

There is nothing more convincing than the fact that sport, or better motory education, is a fundamental and essential experience in youngsters' integral education.

School and sport should be a biologically natural and consequential dual concept:

- natural, because motion means life, therefore the school is the first institution that should ensure this right;
- consequential, because the educational project the school is based on can only be unitary if it includes a work programme which is neuro-physiologically appropriate for the age group it is referred to.

Nobody can deny that motion from its very first defensive, approving and, more in general, vital instinctive forms, is the pivotal element in the man/environment relationship.

Motion has had an essential role in man's humanising and civilising process as it has marked the evolution of man's anthropological history up to the aesthetic education we have reached today.

And if motricity is the paradigm in animal's life, for man it is a support for his mental life.

With this definition Prof. Pfanner, a neurophysiologist, dispelled all doubts on the importance of motricity for the integral and unitary education of man.

Unfortunately in Italy these assumptions, though accepted and shared by all currents of thought, are not implemented, at least not in the most appropriate way, so that the marriage between school and sport proceeds with difficulties and uncertainties.

Sport and its values have been debated at all levels, but I notice that besides the above principles, everyone tends to highlight some details, also in terms of a dialectic speculation I personally define as "opportunistic philosophy."

To be clear, I often think that the universal val-

ues of sport end up by being subject to the system that evokes and adopts them, so that they may serve such system.

The universality of sports practice, in its cause and effect relationship, is filtered by many compromises, resulting in contradictory issues and producing difficulties in language and identification.

In the long run, this complex trend may involve Olympic sport and its principles, because:

- it must accept the growing compromise between sport and entertainment, in its consequential aspects;
- it tends to accept the educational compromise between sport and business.

Similarly I could list other critical points, all subject to entertainment, which is now becoming the main target, where a “result at all costs” is required, with all its deceptions.

But going back to the school, nobody can deny this natural bond between school and sports practice.

A bond that must conform to a fundamental requirement, otherwise the functions of schools on the one hand and of sporting associationism on the other may be distorted.

There is only one fundamental requirement: sport must be introduced in schools for educational and organisational needs.

I have already mentioned the educational needs at the beginning of this paper and I don't want to go back on this issue.

The school's specific organisational needs include a global educational project, valid for all students, particularly for compulsory schooling age groups.

But there are also logistic and economic reasons. as school facilities cannot meet the requirements of the different sports that may be advanced by students.

The statement or slogan “sport at school level” expresses a pragmatic philosophy, according to which sports practice may find its correct positioning within the school, and may later be developed and integrated.

In order to be clear and concrete, I think that this conclusion may be reached by deduction and through the experience so far acquired:

1) - the school must not neglect or eliminate other subjects in favour of sport.

Sport must be positioned in specific additional hours, in harmony with the other subjects;

2) - the school cannot accept and provide equally for all the different sports.

This is for propaedeutic and pedagogical reasons.

3) - the number of months during which school facilities are made available cannot be increased.

This is both for internal economic reasons, but also for the use of facilities by a private sports organisation, often thriving outside this world, but also desperately seeking to use school facilities;

4) - the school should not be structured and organised in the same way as Sports Clubs, as it lacks the specific competence.

It is therefore a matter of realising a project, in compliance with educational aims, and consistent in terms of time, working method and physicomotory choice, which should prevail over the needs and interests of other parties.

The school activity programme, in this case, must have specific characteristics, in order to safeguard the above fundamental principles, and more specifically:

1) it must involve the whole class as the concept of team is synonymous of "class";

2) it must provide polyvalent activities as youngsters should not specialise too early. It must be a "sports-game" for all;

3) it must exclude conditioning, resulting from the teacher's sporting experience in his/her youth. Too often teachers tend to privilege the sport they practice;

4) it must be an activity including basic technical training from which aptitudes may be identified;

5) it must resolve the problem of club members vs. non members, ensuring their coexistence in the same "class-group".

In Italy not all school students are trained by Sports Associations; therefore the student-sporter must be in the same group as the student-beginner;

6) it must privilege the group, while highlighting individual aspects;

7) it must include a sufficiently broad lapse of time covering a long period of the school year;
8) it must not provide for a fully structured game, otherwise fixed sporting activities dominate and become selective;

9) it must be a joyful activity, both for those who practice it and watch it;

10) it must leave room for and promote a series of complementary side activities, therefore arousing different interest and motivation, i.e. organisational, promotional and journalistic competence, etc. in those who are less involved. With this formula, which is to be introduced in elementary schools, in the form of propaedeutic activities, games - typical of the 6 to 13 years age group - would be anticipated and could later acquire a more concrete physiognomy, to be further characterised and structured at a later age.

Alongside these activities, that could be defined as sports for all, a more strictly sporting activity could be developed, in the form of tournaments for students, with specific fixtures established by the competent Federations.

The student-athlete should compete for the school he/she belongs to.

To meet further needs, a link could be found within the school associationism - still to be created - grouping different cultural interests, whose aim is to establish a permanent co-operation between the school and Sports Clubs, so far inexistent.

Finally this collaboration between the school and Sport Associationism (Provincial Education Office, CONI's Provincial Committees, and Local Governments) could result in a co-operation agreement with common economic interests for a concrete and rational use of resources:

1) the school lacks the experience and the heritage of Associationism and needs funds and support for the technical-sporting organisation;

2) Associationism needs the school for a balanced recruitment of human resources without creating undesirable competition between the different Sports Federations, and needs to use their facilities without causing conflicts, and for promoting sports education for social and mor-

al purposes.

This Triplet would be perfect as man is at the centre of the interest for all three institutions, whose aim is to favour the development of man to his full psychophysical integrity, a man more deeply rooted in the social system and increasingly reaching for culturally and economically productive values.

Sport and the disabled child

by Giovanni Notarnicola

I don't like using the word handicapped because I consider it disrespectful, both for its etymology and for its equine origin. "Hand in the cap" the hand that, in this case, draws a losing number from the hat!

It would be a good thing if, for this definition, the international community moved on to more scientific terms like: hypogifted or disabled, having the sagacity of completing the concept.

Disabled in the movements? This does not exclude the person from being 'able' in the remaining elective activities of the human race.

The term handicapped incites, too much, a note of exclamation, peremptorily dividing the living between able and disabled people. If I were to bring the national basketball team, the world champions to climb the Matterhorn, I'm sure I would see many disabilities. If, suddenly, there were a blackout in a lighted room, I wouldn't be surprised if a blind man took me by the hand and guided me to the exit.

We are all, therefore, able and disabled in something.

Certainly, a disabled won't be able to enter the hundred meters Olympic finals, however no one can keep him from covering a hundred meters with his own means.

Every parent, more or less apparently, behaves in two opposite ways regarding his child's sporting activity. There are parents with a thermometer and parents with a chronometer; those who try to sicken their children and those who try to turn them into champions, those that press on the brake and those that press on the accelerator.

Parents of disabled children rarely consider practising a sport, and the environment that surrounds it, as a real psychosomatic therapy; they regard it as a vaguely circumstantial recreative experience. They don't accept it willingly because they seriously believe their loved ones'

imperfections should be concealed and not shown (ISEF - Higher School of Physical Training - Florence survey on five hundred families with disabled members).

There you have the word handicapped in its true social translation.

These parents don't understand that their children, with sports, show their merits, not their imperfections; they don't understand that sport gives everyone a living heritage much more useful than a bank account; differentiated on two great themes of life: never deceive yourself, never give up!

At this point I think it would be best to tell an anecdote.

During a sporting competition I injured my upper right limb, which was immobilised for a month.

From birth, I had designated my right limb as a general logistic executive director, supported by the left limb, having unknown provisional and temporary functions.

Because of the injury my left limb was suddenly obliged to take care of everything: shaving, combing my hair, sweetening my coffee, opening and closing doors, etc..

One word began to be filled with truly experienced emotions: disability. Simple and repetitive chores, usually carried out by my right limb, seemed the labours of Hercules for my left limb. As time went by a second word won its episodic value: recovery!

That so impaired left limb was slowly getting used to the chores it had to carry out so much that, when the blockage was removed from the right one, by now, the left limb excellently saw to my social affairs.

But another word was patiently lying in wait for me, the word regression!

That right limb of mine, the absolute protagonist, proved to be clumsy and in difficulty, weak, sometimes undependable in answering to the most elementary solicitations.

Life's events had wanted to teach me a lesson. Since then, although my right limb regained its usual ability I have not allowed my left limb to regress what it had gained. Carrying a suitcase, turning the pages of a book, chopping wood, drawing were all chores I purposely assigned to both of my upper limbs, without jeopardising my lateralisation.

Now I ask myself if disability can be considered the unable arm of a Western European society

that is too much in love with its able arm.

If it were so, I would like to tell this society to gain conscience of the fact that sport must be seen as a universal heritage which develops the great themes of the existence, a fundamental duty-right of every human being.

I wish this society would understand that winning and losing are marginal facts in our existence.

Unfortunately our society, in many fields, and therefore also in sports, is satisfied with solving the problems of possession, sometimes of appearance, emphasising only colossal aspects. What should happen to our society for it to realise that it also has the other arm? Must it injure the so-called able arm? This, however, has already begun to occur with doping and many cases of corruption!

At this point I really hope that both social limbs will be used wisely and simultaneously, so much that one heals the other when necessary!

I hope that the "spectacular" is left aside to favour the spectacle, an event that, in sports, can simply be seen in the performance of any athlete who decides to do his best in a competition.

And even if this best can be measured with a plus or minus, it still remains the best, an unaltered value with respect to any type of quantity and quality.

Parents should throw away thermometers and chronometers, and, if there are no peremptory contraindications, they should bring their children to play happily right from their early years of life, remembering that the child does not like the game because he is himself part of the game, like the fox cannot love nature since she is part of nature.

The disabled have many difficulties in beginning a sporting activity simply because during their childhood they were too often left motionless and only during their late adolescence they found the courage to answer to the attraction of motory practice.

If we want all children to practise sports, and be enriched by its teachings, we must organise centres to freely restore the heritage of mankind. I have developed a motory learning method based on environment, model and motivation.

An engaging environment for able and disabled similar to the natural environment of the hedge, the hay-loft, the tree etc..

Free movements are exhibited by the best sub-

jects who act as models, therefore triggering the motivation to react in others.

Environment, model, motivation are the pedagogic drive of human evolution to this day: nature (environment), adventure (motivation), perfect figure (model). The Western-European crisis is indeed based on the now scarce presence of these three basic elements: the horizon, the conquest, the hero.

I have called this basic educational method "Active Environmentalism". Many operators in this field consider the results I obtain on the disabled, both on a motory, emotional-relational and logistic-mental level, as excellent.

In our society, nature, adventure and the perfect figure are distributed to children from the television set because, as nowadays Western Europe is killing nature, it exchanges adventure with transgression and it considers perfect figures only those that appear on television.

Christopher Columbus and Marco Polo seem to have disappeared with the conquest of the moon. Both able and disabled children must, within the limits of what they can freely give, renew the intelligence of the species, in a free environment with proposals of motory boldness. The intelligence of mankind, in front of a television set becomes a kind of intelligence, while in the game it becomes a vehicle to ensure that both the able and the disabled reach the bottom of our hearts.

On risks and wrongdoings in early sports practice

by Jacques Personne

The exploitation of sports results by institutions for political purposes is a historically new phenomenon. From sports' aims fixed by adults derive various consequences for youngsters.

Truth was represented by ancient populations as naked. Some comedians say it was naked so that anybody could dress it as they liked.

This is maybe why Apollo, the god of sports, is delivered to us in a simple form, judging from the diversity of lectures concerning him. The introduction to UNESCO's Manifesto on Sports reports that sport encourages meetings of men in a sincere and happy atmosphere,.... creates solidarity, generous deeds....., if practised with fair-play, with a fair and gentlemanly spirit it is a formidable educational tool.....

However, during the Sports National Meetings which last October gathered in Strasbourg several hundreds representatives from different associations, 125 out of the 128 interviewed participants (97%) answered "yes" to the question: "Is there a divergence between what we think sport is and what it really is?" The title of the Meetings was: "Helping endangered sports".

Undoubtedly we must make a distinction between the wrongdoings involved at top-levels and the healthy atmosphere of many clubs, but we cannot ignore one's influence over the other.

The Olympic motto: "Faster, higher, braver" represented a model until it was linked to ethical values, humanistic values, the values de-

fended by Panathlon International and UNESCO.

As those values faded and even disappeared, when performance and records prevail, when the prize is more important than the game, according to Mr. Ferren, then the wrongdoings become numerous: cheating, corruption, chauvinism and fanaticism, violence, doping. Wrongdoings initially involved the exploitation of sports performance for political prestige purposes. Eastern countries promoters were soon followed in this path by Western and Southern countries.

The interests of nations were increasingly the best profit guarantee, and we saw business and sponsors becoming the 'decision-makers' in many fields, including in the organisation of competitions.

Under these conditions, with powerful and antagonist interests at stake, in a vortex of parasite influences, how could competitions take place in a "sincere and happy atmosphereaccording to a loyal and gentlemanly spirit..?"

Criticism of top-level sports is not the topic of our lecture but we thought it necessary to briefly mention the consequences of this unfortunate situation on children and adolescents.

First of all we must say that this situation is not only dangerous for youngsters, although some take advantage from it, but how many athletes, unknown or stars, are victims of an unrestrained quest for record performances? The public is not well informed on this subject. Accidents in stadiums are well known but 'behind the scenes' accidents are not.

For example, how many people know that in a single year, 1984, five national team skiers out of twelve (40%) suffered damage to knee frontal ligament ?

It represents an exception when the public is informed on the overall damages.

The French rugby team captain Jean-Pierre Rives, wanting to explain why he decided to retire from international competitions, said: "My radiologist told me my spine was like that of somebody who had a car accident" and courtesy of desperation he added " I exit through the infirmary door".

He is a sports star, but who knew that in 1987 out of 88 track and field Olympic athletes 50% suffered from tendon damage and 39%

suffered osteoarticular lesions?

Eleven of them - one in eight - underwent an operation during that year.

We must understand that these are problems very different from current accidents - sprains, dislocations, fractures - very visible, painful traumas, often linked to the violent or dangerous nature of an exercise.

The chronic, initially subtle problems discussed in the previous paragraph, will become more serious as time goes by, due to small, painless aggressions: 'micro-traumas'.

Caused by;

- excessive load: two tons pressure on the supporting leg of a downhill skier;
- the amount of repetitions of similar or identical exercises which involve repeatedly some particular areas. In 1987 the French women gymnastics team performed 117,000 acrobatic exercises during 10 months;
- often they are caused by a combination of the two excesses.

Mr. Commandré, m.d., explains that : "There is a close link between the mechanism causing the lesion and the bio-mechanics of the sports exercise... Intensive practice breeds a pathology caused by articulations' excessive use... It becomes an 'excessive wear' pathology... Bio-mechanical stresses go beyond the limits tolerated by the tissues...."

A simile can illustrate the effects of micro-traumas on bones: the fall of water droplets on a calcareous surface.

The following are some examples of awareness of this problem in the sports world:

- tennis courts, contrary to what happened some decades ago, are mainly clay courts instead of hard surfaces - in athletics, in order to increase the intensity of training sessions, when the osteoarticular system is close to exhaustion, athletes run in water wearing a special wet vest. I thought it was a joke before seeing actual pictures and articles.

The osteoarticular system is generally able to withstand micro-traumas until the third or fourth age, without excesses like wear due to some professions - and, most of all early age excesses. Decay will not spare adult athletes but, whatever the motives, commercial or not, the right to risk must be granted to adults.

But adults do not have the right to make children run those risks because they are not sufficiently mature and therefore unable to eval-

uate such risks. However, the unrestrained quest for record performances causes children to be overloaded, like adults, with intensive exercises and repetitions imposed upon developing organisms and fragile skeletons, this is something no reasonable person can ignore.

We can ask the following question on adult athletes deterioration: did these problems already exist in those who practised early intensive training? Deterioration is often diagnosed in children and adolescents.

Here are some examples:

Gymnastics:

- 40% of young gymnasts from 6 to 10 suffer from tendinitis;

- 83% of radiological problems involving the radius were recorded among 98 of the best European junior gymnasts (boys and girls). Astonishing figures.

Swimming: two American surgeons had to operate on 26 out of the 28 shoulders of 14 young swimmers who, as they said "already flip-turned a million and a half times" (and knowing the modern training rhythms this figure seems to be less than expected). Doctors denounce: "Abused children syndrome athletic abuse which is tolerated by society!" To better understand the spirit of managers involved in these kinds of practices we quote the 'method' that the U.S. swimming team coach at the Tokyo Games gave to late Prof. Creff: "You take a basket of eggs and throw it against the wall. The eggs that remain unbroken are the champions!"

As far as tennis is concerned Mr. Costeau, m.d., one of the very few federal physicians who warn against these dangers said: "Intensive sports training practised for four hours a day is anti-physiologic the child will be prematurely 'burnt out' and when he or she is 18 years old he will suffer from tendinitis - Jean Borotra never suffered from it - and his/her arms and legs will have sustained more training hours than Borotra when he competed in his fourth Davis Cup. We must say that as far as competitive sports are concerned it's do or die. And there is a lot of 'dying'.

Youngsters who have to interrupt their sports careers because of an accident do not end up in the news". Michel Platini, the soccer player, asked, with no success, to close the 'Training Centres' he reported as centres that

produced “no stars and more tired players at 21 and burnt out players at 23 or 24”.

We add that in many sports a series of torn bones are caused by excessive muscular mass induced in children or adolescents whose muscles become too powerful and tear their connection to the bone.

Disregarding the dangers denounced by skilled and careful coaches, young people are competing in marathons (since they are 4 if boys, and 6 if girls in the United States), long and middle distance competitions which take place on roads - hard surfaces not even suitable for jogging. These sports cause exhaust fractures, feet and knee deformities, sciatica, vertebral lesions. Without going to these extremes, during the ‘Up-to-date Debate’ of 1991 Bichat Lectures devoted, already at that time, to “Risks and wrongdoings in intensive early sports practice”, Mr. Stephan, m.d., a physician of INSEP and top-level coach, introduced statistics on “results reached during the senior career” of athletes who were considered “best rookies and junior athletes from 1964 to 1967”.

TABLE No. 1

| SPORT | No. of junior athletes | No. of first 10 senior placements | No. of first 110 senior placements |
|--------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 400 m | 60 | 0 | 6 |
| 800 m | 43 | 1 | 8 |
| 1500 m | 40 | 2 | 7 |
| 5000 m | 40 | 2 | 8 |

From 400 m to 5000 m less than 5% of athletes were among the first 10 senior placements - 95% of the best were therefore among those who were “lucky” enough not to be chosen and trained at a young age.

All the others “brilliant rookie, average junior, mediocre senior” the waste of hopes. Same figures abroad.

A reasonable follow up on these burnt out young athletes is difficult, and besides the secondary aspect of results but considering the main aspect of health, we can see

that this performance regression at an age when athletes are not in their declining stage is not organically favourable, in the medium and long run.

Apart from physical issues it is impossible not to stress the problems related to the psychological balance necessary to a balanced life of young people in elite class centres, deeply involved in 'obsessively running for success', often obliged, at an age when they are vulnerable, to leave their families, their social environment and be submitted to permanent "excessive work" sessions: 15 to 18 weekly training hours on average, and sometimes, in gymnastics and skating, 25 or more.

And all this in addition to attending school where the timetable is 'customised' to their needs but programmes are not.

To this we add training camps during vacation time, a time when rest is considered necessary for all other children.

And more, a diet is imposed upon them in case of weight problems. In addition we must not forget girls gynaecological problems and the effects which, in the long run, cannot be ignored.

Fans of early intensive training report the excellent results obtained by some young athletes - some of them are super-strong - but they do not mention the condition of many others who failed, having undergone the same 'treatment'.

It is very important to make all secrets public.

Because if people are kept unaware, only results, medals, records and chauvinism influence them.

From an ethical point of view performance should never be considered more important than children, and in the name of ethics all unfortunate methods should be rejected, we must fight against this 'abuse' and offer the public a therapy which immunises them.

This is why I support children-friendly training. It should also be stressed that many great performers were lucky enough not to undergo tests, early specialisations and problems.

We must show, by using many examples, that there are many paths leading to top level achievements which ignore early intensive training and early specialisation.

TABLE No.2

| | NO. OF INTERNATIONAL CLASS ATHLETES | | OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALS | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| | NO. | % | NO. | % |
| TOTAL | 661 | | 94 | |
| GROUP I | 59 | 8,9 | 5 | 5.3 |
| GROUP II I | 29 | 19,5 | 18 | 19.1 |
| GROUP III | 473 | 71,6 | 71 | 75.5 |

Quoted from Karikosk

* Group 1 specific training at 15

Group 2 specific training at 17

Group 3 specific training at 19

During the Bichat Lectures Mr. Stephan introduced some statistics prepared by the Soviet coach Karikosk and concerning 661 international athletes, 94 of which Olympic gold medallists - 70% of them did not start specific training and performance till they were 19 years old and 20% before they were 17 years old.

These statistics refer to athletics, a discipline where many specialities (sprints and multi-events) can be considered 'closed activities' as defined by the British pedagogue Barbara Knapp, because the performance conditions do not vary at all or vary very little.

'Open activities' are those in which performance conditions are varied for their very nature and require adaptation skills: outdoor sports and sports where two parties challenge each other (individual fighting and team sports).

These sports produced a great number of champions who devoted themselves to a specific discipline at an apparently late time, after practising different sports.

John Mac Enroe who was the world tennis No. 1 player for a long time is an example of the above said. In fact in his case we can distinguish from 'early specialisation', to be avoided, and 'early practice without specialisation' a method that he followed by beginning to play tennis when he was 8 years old for no more than 2 hours a week, while playing, at the same time, basketball and football. At 14 he was only the No. 10 junior player in the U.S..... this before being No. 1 for a long time.

This does not mean that we must avoid all steps towards adolescents' specialisation and willingness to reach their top level, or just the top level. But side by side with other sports, the stress must be on refining sensations, perceptions, reaching technical skills, with the exclusion of traumatic work loads.

As far as understanding why some Federations, tennis, soccer and judo among many others, encourage early practice of their disciplines since 5 or 6 years of age, we know that the main aim is to train youth ranks before others do, falsely supporting the theory that early childhood beginners reach better results. This theory is completely false and is denied by many examples in all sports except one: gymnastics which is still considered 'artistic' in the spirit of the recent historical decision - of just over two decades ago - by the International Federation of giving less emphasis to the artistic aspect of this sport and privileging the 'acrobatic-risky' aspect of it, a field where children are the best.... This evolution could be considered like a mutant aberration in human beings. Vera Caslavskaja the greatest gymnastics champion of all times, 20 gold medals, vehemently protested against this choice. We hope this decision will be reconsidered and that the artistic value of gymnastics will soon be duly appreciated again. While waiting for this to happen we cannot consider results as more important than our respect for children.

Apart from this exception, the main aim of all Federations supporting early specialisation is that of increasing the number of their members and having the best children among them, children who often excel in many sports, and often more in other sports than in the one they were occasionally urged to choose at an early age.

Whether a club supports or not early specialisation depends on its managers and environment: parents, friends, sponsors, authorities. Some are faithful to UNESCO's guidelines and did not hesitate to affirm it at the National Sports Meetings. Others exploit local chauvinism to obtain prestigious results and prizes by 'collecting' youngsters without bothering about destroying their future career.

Allow me to tell you about my personal experience. 30 years ago, together with 6 other managers from different disciplines (athletics, basketball, soccer, and tennis) belonging to an important club of the Parisian suburbs, the "Vic au

Grand Air” in Saint-Maur, I took part in the implementation of a “multi-sports beginners programme” offering young people, starting from 6 year-olds and mainly ranging from 8 to 12 years, the opportunity to practise various sports among which they could later choose one, or more, they were willing to continue. This example was later followed by some clubs and ‘city sports schools’. The training offered is similar in spirit to that recommended by Prof. Bizzini of *Unione Sportiva dell’Insegnamento Elementare* (Elementary teaching sports union), by the best qualified educators and coaches and by many champions, among which one of the most famous, Sebastian Coe who defined early specialisation: “We must not lock children in a cage and blindfold their eyes”. During his lecture in Avignon he had a *lapsus-linguae* and said “We must not lock children in a cellar.....”

The Saint-Maur VGA multi sports beginners programme, starting from the day following its creation, never had less than 1,000 members and is still very important.

This fact has a special value because it influenced, in the course of the last 30 years, the opinion of the managers of different sections of the club although it also caused tensions, which were later relieved. But within the omnisport club some sections, following the example set by their Federations, continue organising early practice for youngsters who end up in the “basketball cage” or in the “tennis cage” from the age of 5 or 6 years.

Early specialisation is an impoverishment which is not necessarily linked to intensive practice. However, early intensive training is often added to specialisation or is an extension of it.

Many people are responsible for this situation; parents who are driven sometimes by aspirations and more often by a will to overcome personal frustrations, defeats, or by vanity: “doing better than the Joneses” using their children.

Coaches and doctors are responsible, both driven by identical motives: fame and money. But the former and the latter could not act undisturbed without the approval of sports and political authorities who hold the greatest responsibility.

The media are responsible too because they praise children’s performances showing no critical approach. They want to attract audience and please public opinion, which they contributed to turn into ‘medals-addicted’.

In conclusion, if early intensive training were

to abide by labour laws, the factory owner who imposed on youngsters the work load imposed on them in the sports' world would be sued. Legal actions are very rare in the production sector because there is a protected limit: labour laws. Recently, in 1992, children working as models, a paid job, were protected by newly published regulations which significantly limit the number of working hours that can be imposed on children.

The lack of such a protection in sports is highly harmful to children as many examples show. And, worse, when youngsters are in the hands of true fanatics of performance. Is women's gymnastics a favourite ground? Here are some examples:

- beginning of August 1994, newspapers publish the news of the death, at the Kansas City Hospital, of Christy Henrich, 22, an international gymnast. After one of the referees made a remark on her weight during a selection competition she almost passed, Christy refused to eat food for one year but continued with her training sessions. She lost 20 kg going from 43 to 23 kg. Newspapers report that before she was admitted to hospital neither her family nor her coaches were worried about her condition.....

- Not long ago the bulletin of the International Gymnastics Federation reported the fact that in Romania a coach had beaten to death one of his young pupils. His Federation banned him for life and he was convicted.

- No sanctions for the managers of the French Gymnastics Federation who included an adolescent girl with a cracked vertebra in the qualification events at the team World Championships (vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercises). In this case the truth was not clearly revealed. Last December, during the Championships we 'only' read on newspapers that Elodie Lussac, 15 and a half, the best French athlete was treated with some anti-inflammatory injections in order to allow her to take part in the competitions. Newspapers headlines read: Elodie's Calvary. At the beginning of January we 'only' read on newspapers that she was wearing a plaster cast because she had a fractured vertebra due to stress and that after the cast she would have to wear a special corset for three months and after that she would undergo rehabilitation for two months. Maybe her parents did not protest because they are involved in their daughter's career. The competent Ministry.

which delegates powers to the Federation involved, did not show any interest in this situation. The media too were not very curious....

One might think this is an exception. In conclusion we want to introduce a document we could call “a journal of ordinary fanaticism”.

During April 1988, “Antenne 2” broadcast a programme entitled “Les Excès du sport” (Sports Excesses), concerning a women’s gymnastics club.

Here is a 5-minutes-excerpt during which :

- you will hear adolescents describing how they are treated (insulted and beaten);
- you will see a forced bending session where very young athletes start the exercise as a game and later show the signs of pain;
- you will hear two mothers accusing : “They ruined my daughter, and her, and her, and her too...”;
- you will hear the coach calmly saying : “..... they do not understand that accidents and small physical accidents are natural events in life.... maybe they want to stir up a hornet’s nest in order to stop us from succeeding?”....

The only possible comment is:

Following the example of the Labour Laws, measures should be taken to protect youngsters in sports in order to comply with the “Charter for Children’s Sporting Rights” defended by Panathlon International.

Report by Co-ordinators per language areas

Giorgio Odaglia

(Italian-speaking area)

We did not discuss in depth general topics in order to refer to the concrete and practical proposals recommended by our Clubs, as when applied locally they may yield short-term results.

Some proposals which emerged when debating on the family focused on the really important role that could be played in practice and ideally by the elderly members of the family.

It should be highlighted that from a practical point of view grandparents have more time and often readily pay great attention to youngsters, and can therefore guide them from motory activities to real sports.

From a cultural point of view, grandparents are not so interested in the high sporting achievements of their grandchildren, but are more focused on a ludic, educational, healthy motory activity.

Family members should intervene more in the organisation of sporting activities. Many surveys conducted by Clubs revealed that most parents are already members of sports organisations or clubs, but their further involvement could certainly produce positive results.

Another aspect of this issue is the useful support (documented also by some contributions) by parents and family members in general to sporting events; this involvement often helped find new spaces fit for motory activities, sometimes even in public spaces and parks.

The effectiveness of sporting education provided at home was then considered. Naturally family members could gradually teach young people those moral principles that as panathletes we could basically summarise in the definition of fair play and that can only be considered deeply rooted if acquired during childhood.

Also other educational topics should be discussed at family level: several contributions highlighted that children should be taught a ra-

tional and correct nutrition and should be made aware of doping.

Concrete proposals emerged from these observations in favour of more initiatives, already started by some Clubs, promoting the creation of commissions entrusted with the task of providing families with adequate information for their educational actions. Some Clubs also suggested addressing young people, who could then transmit their education to their mates.

Great concern was expressed by most people who intervened in the discussion on the role of the School, by judging curricula and the current implementation of physical education as unsatisfactory.

Some investigations and proposals affirm the need for a guided motory activity already in preschool age as the physical exercise of children from 3 to 6 years helps them develop many qualities and provides the ground for further sporting motory activities. Specific motory education programmes should be implemented by teachers with the support of physical education teachers.

A second phase of the discussion focused on elementary schools and on the whole compulsory schooling age: during this period cultural activities should be supported and integrated with extra curricula activities and more specifically with pre-sporting and sporting activities by P.E. teachers having a technical knowledge of such sporting disciplines as team games, athletics, gymnastics, swimming, etc. considered fundamental for any subsequent specialisation.

At this point Panathlon may give suggestions and indications on another important and delicate task: the organisation of autonomous school sporting associationism, without interference from competitive federations, which would be particularly significant to reach a sufficient “dose” of sporting activities for a broad population of students.

All this, in compliance with the Charter for Youngsters’ Rights, if P.E. teachers have previously been adequately trained, preferably after completing a regular University or col-

lege course and have graduated.

Without going into general criticisms, everybody examined and supported the need to promote a renewed school-sporting attitude by headmasters and many teachers.

Finally, since it was affirmed that 60% of students randomly chose the sport they were to practise, measures should be taken to ensure more rational and motivated reasons in the student's selection. Introduction to a competitive sport should be better guided and instructors and possibly doctors should have more opportunities to intervene.

Some contributors asked Panathlon to intervene through its local organisations to contribute in solving problems related to sports facilities and organisation.

The fundamental role of sports organisations was then examined, as they must create the necessary conditions for all youngsters, both gifted and non-gifted, to practise sports, and the need was pointed out for managers and the technical staff to be specifically trained, to guarantee a really rational organisation within sports clubs.

The importance of this role is proven by the responsibilities which lie today with the President of a sports club: moral, juridical, administrative-accounting, health and fiscal responsibilities. The tasks of a sports manager appear to be simple and easy, but it is not so: he is a volunteer and his work has an immense value from a sporting and social point of view.

An issue already raised when debating on schools, has once again cropped up, i.e. school associationism can and must promote and organise sporting activities.

Associations (and not just big sports clubs as is the case today) should always include separate youth ranks, with their own managers, technical staff, doctors all specifically devoted to youngsters.

Sports clubs statutes and programmes should include special initiatives and pay great attention to sports education and Fair Play principles: we should advance our suggestions on how to include them in the programmes of sports Asso-

ciations.

Finally, the hope was expressed that sports Federations may carry out investigations and in-depth studies to identify the real dangers in sporting activities and, based on these, fix the age for entering competitive activities, as well as specific regulations governing competitions for young people.

This also focuses the attention on the youngsters' medical check-up, following the principle that preliminary medical fitness is essential to ascertain the necessary health conditions to introduce an individual to a specific sport, with the only perspective of ensuring beneficial effects and excluding psychophysical damages. A law providing a correct and clear health protection, which to date does not exist, would be very important and should be uniformly adopted.

Cipriano Barreto Amaro

(Spanish and Portuguese-speaking areas)

As representatives from Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Portugal and Mexico we identified the role of the family as the essential promoter in youngsters education; we discussed the responsibility of this entity in the youngsters/parents relationship and verified the fact that great awareness in sports activity is required, particularly for its educational, cultural and social functions and related effects on health and leisure time.

This cannot obviously be understood by the youngster during his first years of life, therefore it's the family that must introduce the child to sport.

We examined in depth the existing relationship between family, school and society and we consider the family as really responsible for the health of its children and their sound growth.

The family should pay special attention to the functional morphology of youngsters since their birth.

We also pondered over parents' participation in the psychomotory development of their children and on the child's need to be encouraged to play games.

For this reason we thought that family and school should be complementary.

We also examined the way in which a game is transformed into a sport: from a free and spontaneous game to a school game and later an organised discipline.

Youngsters should find points of reference in sport, they should be able to select a preferential sport, they must experience how to learn and be tolerant during training, if correctly motivated.

Finally they also have the right to be trained to compete. For this reason the family should

not act alone, but in co-operation with the school, with sports clubs, with the social and cultural environment in which we live.

In brief:

- The family is responsible for promoting sport among youngsters;
- The family, together with the school, must guarantee the youngster's basic education with respect to early training.
- It is the family that makes sure that youngsters gradually access sport, by protecting their physical, psychic and moral integrity.
- The family must dedicate time and provide a sporting model for its children.
- The family must always respect the will, characteristics, needs and interests of the youngsters who wish to practise sports.

Every attempt of sports promotion in schools must be done within basic education; generally at elementary and secondary lower schools, after the experience of preschool, essentially based on psychomotory and physical education.

But the school is part of a national education system, which in turn is part of society; so that sport cannot be a unilateral solution provided by the P.E. teacher or by a group of teachers or by the headmaster.

Importance is also acquired by the school's technical advice, by parents and society.

An integral, harmonic education must be ensured, as sports practice by young people is a state education issue, it is included in Ministry programmes and must be an integral part of school curricula and of the social environment.

Today in developing countries sports training often separates physical and sports activities from historical and cultural contexts, from health, leisure, ethics.

So our Commission did not formulate proposals, but simply presented a statement.

We hereby affirm that sports physical education, as part of an individual's integrated development must be considered as a fundamental subject in school curricula and programmes for young people.

We therefore firmly recommend to ask all national and international organisations within UNESCO, and linked to sport, to include

sports education as a teaching subject in school curricula, at all levels and in all education methods.

Our intent is to be able to take joint actions so that sports education may become a daily practice in school for young people's education.

Raymond Bron

(French-speaking area)

Our discussion was in more general terms and at international level; Clubs and their regions will later have to find the correct means to transfer to their reality the proposals which have been put forth. We naturally started from the Charter for Children's Sporting Rights and we analysed in particular the principle of point 4, which states that every child has the right to be treated with dignity.

We consider this as the core issue, the starting point for all measures to be taken by institutions to protect children and not just in sports.

The family issue.

We think that the family's primary task is to acknowledge the need for a motory education, a consistent and correct physical education. Acknowledging means knowing and this implies being informed in order to assess the importance of the movement to favour the development both of a child's body and mind. This proposal should invite parents to react when the school does not meet expectations or is not in compliance with the law.

This proposal should invite parents to react, also against the role, often judged negative, of the media.

The second point to be examined consists in creating the necessary conditions favouring a harmonious development, and this falls within the primary duties of the family.

These are obviously encouraging measures, but, above all it's a question of creating the necessary psychological, social and sometimes material conditions which enable a child to express his motory abilities and favour his development.

The third point highlights the fact that the family must not impose early sports training. A child's development stages must be respected, particularly his interiorization and abstraction ability.

Fourth point: we think that the family, parents in particular, should not project their ambitions on the children, as this often implies excessive training, an early sports training.

As for the fifth point, fair play as well as sportsmanship and social behaviour should initially be taught by the family.

This is one of the duties we attribute to the family, and we think that a sports practice may also draw generations closer together and may facilitate the dialogue.

We should not be deceived on the possibility of providing a high quality sports and motory education.

The family is a continuously changing cell and often parents face so many problems that some hold that the challenge for the future cannot rely only on the family.

The school's prime role consists in providing the broadest possible knowledge, therefore an eclectic sport practice; despite the organisation problems highlighted this morning, the school should provide the broadest possible sports practice, valid for a whole lifetime.

The second point being highlighted is that the school should make a clear distinction between physical education and sports practice; the school's aims and curricula should be adequate for the students and respect their development stages.

We also debated whether small children need specialised teachers or not.

We reached an agreement on the fact that all teachers have to be competent, very sensitive to their pupils' needs, and must show sufficient enthusiasm to transmit what they should transmit.

We know that teachers' training is an open issue but we didn't want to discuss it in further detail.

The time to be assigned to physical education as part of the school curricula, was not defined and generically referred to as "sufficient time".

Different countries and regions have different rules that provide for part of the teaching programme to be dedicated to the body.

therefore to physical education.

What we ask is to comply with these laws and rules, as this is not done everywhere.

The first proposal is referred to the objectives. We think sports clubs should not exclusively and systematically rely on the apex of the pyramid.

We think they should favour the development of talents at all levels.

The aims of clubs should be part of a general ethical picture, which should result in a "charter for sports clubs" to be circulated among managers, technical staff members, authorities and in general among the sporting environment.

Panathlon could draw up a model charter to help clubs create their own charter, taking into account the club's history and background.

Second proposal: every group of children should be provided with an appropriate trainer.

We are thinking in particular of younger children, less gifted and beginners. These groups deserve specifically trained coaches and not just the latest coach to be hired, because only top teams are the ones that bring medals.

A second aspect of this issue deals with coaches' training, that must not be only technical or sporting, but must be extended to all qualities required in an educator.

The third proposal focuses on multidisciplinary activities.

If we want to respect children according to the charter that guided our works in the last two days, youngsters must be given the opportunity to change sports activity.

There are two omnisport clubs, which specifically meet these requirements, but also specialised clubs can do something in this sense by favouring the transfer of children from one club to another. Coaches of young children in particular, should receive polyvalent training.

We also evoked the medical function because we think it necessary to stress the impact of the medical staff in guiding association sports.

The doctor should no longer be seen as the person who stops people from winning medals, but rather as a direct collaborator who is mentioned in the charter for sports clubs to

favour broader educational objectives.

One last point. We obviously pinpointed the role of money in association sports. It is absolutely important for a club to live on the means available.

This is a fundamental rule: avoid being subject to money.

Particularly when revenues, in the form of subsidies or sponsorships, are linked to the results (as is the case in most places).

Arturo Hotz

(German-speaking area)

With regard to the topic of the family and schooling we asked ourselves “what” we actually want to do and why. We agreed on the fact that when we speak of children and sport, at the level of the family and school, we can also speak of sports education, and education through sport must be a priority. Children must be helped to develop their own personality through sport in a correct way, that means developing both human dignity and “fair play”.

Since “fair play” originally meant “making available to horses an adequate ground for their sport”, in this case “fair play” means making available to children, to their stage of development, to their nature and not to children seen as small adults, a place in sport corresponding to his capabilities and his mind level.

As representatives of Panathlon Clubs we undertake to make or to contribute to make pedagogically productive any ethical heritage of ideas. As to the first point (“make pedagogically productive any ethical heritage of ideas”), we are convinced that a recognition process must be established first, as nowadays sport is too widespread, so we should insist more on movement, which is something more than sport: movement as a primary opportunity of expression, as a link and interaction between people and society. Sport is above all competition, even if Olympic tradition would like to see the opposite effect, and current developments have shown that sport is going beyond competition.

We don’t just want to aim at a recognition of sport, but rather through sport we want to contribute to the development of the personality. When asking ourselves “how” we can contribute, we agreed on increasing promotion. A Panathlon Club should not only meet at a dinner or sporting event, or offer the “fair play” award, it must have targeted actions.

We would like our magazine to be changed in the

future into monographs so as to analyse in several topics the ethical and pedagogical problem and develop in a clear way this wealth of ideas. Broadly speaking, promotion should be through numerous conferences, project discussion, so as to provide families with concrete proposals. Finally, we would like to launch actions in co-operation with schools to explain that sport is an ideal means contributing to the development of the personality.

If we want to act responsibly, not only within Clubs, and we want to go beyond borders to promote this responsibility also outside clubs, we shall use the Charter for children's rights, by responsibly implementing the points it outlines.

Since we raised questions and issues like in an editorial staff, we confronted ourselves with some aspects we think deserve further discussion. We speak, for example, of a child's "treatment". A child is not a trading good, we must accompany him in his growth, encourage him, undertake to guarantee his well-being and therefore he is not to be "treated", in the classical meaning of this word. We were not even convinced by the expression "the same opportunity of success". There is no equal opportunity. This principle can be perhaps exalted in adults' competitive sports, by virtue of the free will of participants. At the level of children the work, encouragement, training and practice of a sport must be done according to specific requirements. This means that we might not have the same perspectives in terms of results, and this means that unless competitions are organised according to specific rules and categories, they are absurd.

If the child has the right to act within a "sound" environment, we asked what we meant by "sound". This word must be interpreted in a broad sense and therefore, most probably, it almost always corresponds to the common sense of the people. On the other hand, the problem of the age, in the case of children, calls for a distinction between anagraphical age and biological age. There are different rhythms, and actions can be undertaken only after these rhythms have been identified. Children recognise their own rhythms, but if a sport is practised only according to one's rhythms, selfish-

ness is encouraged. There are also social rhythms and children must be helped, in order to develop their future personalities within society, to be part of a larger whole.

We also discussed “absolutely safe conditions”, which do not exist, it would be more important to grant a child the right to rely on people who can prove to be responsible at any time.

Here are our proposals: acknowledgement of responsibility, interpreted as truth, and this means that all actions have to be taken at the right time. Development is at individual level and the introduction to sport must take place accordingly. Abuses on children in order to achieve competitive results or to implement adults’ objectives or desires must be avoided. The child must be encouraged in his development not according to the criteria set by the outside world, except for those that come from the social context, but in an optimal and customised way. Finally promotion, if possible, of several sports from multilateral sources.

Final Resolution

The participants in the 10th Congress of Panathlon International, held in Avignon on May 19 and 20, 1995, debated on the topic "Youngsters and Sport".

The problems related to the early introduction of youngsters in sports clubs and in the world of competitions were examined. During congress discussion infancy was intended as the period of life between birth and puberty, therefore up to 12 - 14 years.

Considering the youngster's specific needs in the different stages of his/her growth, this Congress documented and highlighted the risks involved in an early intensive sports training, inadequate to his/her capabilities.

The congress also identified the fundamental responsibility for physical and sports education in the family, in schools, in sports clubs and associations.

To this purpose due consideration was given to the transformation which families undergo in the present-day world. It was also remarked that physical and sports education is normally included in all state school curricula. Sports clubs are well aware that their action is broadly subject to sports federations and particularly affected by public agencies and the media and, in some cases, by sponsors.

The introductory speeches by professor Robert DECKER (Luxembourg), Bruno GRANDI (Italy), Jacques PERSONNE (France) and Joao Gilberto CARAZZATO (Brazil), 4 different groups of cultures and languages, chaired by professors Cipriano BARRETO AMARO (Governor of the 13th District-Mexico), Raymond BRON (Lausanne Panathlon Club), Arturo HOTZ, (Berner Oberland Panathlon Club) and Giorgio ODAGLIA (P.I. Central Board member - Italy), under the general guide of Dr. Lucio BIZZINI (Geneva Panathlon Club), opened an in-depth and lively discussion among congressmen and women from different socio-cultural areas who made contributions and original proposals.

The discussion led to the following hallmarks:

- *“The charter for children’s sporting rights”;*
- *the sports ethics fixed by Panathlon International as a basis for its permanent action aimed at promoting sports education among young people;*
- *knowledge and awareness of a youngster’s requirements in the different phases of his/her growth;*
- *the value of a model in every educational action;*
- *the concept of partnership that must be introduced in case of action by the three institutions involved;*
- *consistent actions which may be beneficial to the development of a youngster.*

At the end of the works specific conclusive and operative proposals were presented to the plenary assembly and will be included in the congress proceedings.

Their synthesis leads Panathlon International to make the following recommendations:

For the family

The family must:

- be intended in its full meaning (children, parents, grandparents, etc.);
- be the first to be responsible for a youngster’s physical and sports education;
- acknowledge the need for this type of education, create the favourable conditions for its practice and reserve it the required time;
- share the responsibility for a progressive approach to sport while respecting a youngster’s growth stages;
- moderate sports results seen through the eyes of a youngster;
- not project the adult’s personal ambitions on the youngster;
- cooperate with other educational and sports cells such as sports clubs and schools.

For the school

The school must:

- recognise the cultural value of sport;
- reserve in curricula hours, sufficient time for

-
- physical and sports education;
 - guarantee the pedagogical, psychological and technical competence of physical and sports education teachers;
 - favour a youngster's individual progress by correct learning and assessment methods;
 - include in school curricula the youngster's progressive approach to sport, based on a broad motor education;
 - ensure the youngster's introduction to traditional sports practice;
 - find correct solutions establishing effective relationships and interactions with sports clubs.

For sports associations

Sports associations and clubs must:

- draw up a charter inspiring the ethical principles and objectives to be attained, this charter must be accepted by all members and partners;
- ensure that every youngster has access to sports he/she freely chooses, irrespective of his/her abilities;
- train its managers to respect sports ethics;
- make sure the different age groups of youngsters have trainers specifically competent in the related pedagogical, psychological and technical fields;
- integrate sports teaching with the knowledge of sports sciences;
- object to a youngster's early intensive training;
- favour the practice of sports among youngsters;

this objective is achieved by:

- using multi-sports instructors;
- being open to the practice of other sports;
- favouring the transfer of youngsters from one club to another.

Panathlon International, its districts and clubs will promote this Final Resolution among competent politicians and sporters in their areas of action, to obtain their co-operation for its enforcement, in observance of all state and cultural specificities.

When combined with the "charter for children's sporting rights", this **Final Resolution**, will offer all Panathletes and all people in charge of

youngsters' physical and sports education a precise and essential network of "guidelines" serving youngsters and sport.

This also allows to finalise and complete, if necessary, the above recommendations, taking into account the different cultures represented by Panathlon members world-wide.

Postface

by Jean Presset

Since 1985 Panathlon International Members, at all levels, have been asked by the Cultural Commission to promote sports education among youngsters as a cultural element belonging to men and to the different peoples.

A new appeal for this commitment was launched in 1990. In an article entitled "Panathlon and youngsters' sports education", published in the October/November issue of our Magazine, the Cultural Commission Chairman asked for the permanent and systemic action by the whole of Panathlon's Movement.

The first important result was obtained in October 1991, as the will to act in favour of the young was introduced, on the occasion of the Presidents' Assembly held in Venice, among the aims of Panathlon International new statute. To this end:

"Panathlon International works towards the ideal of a healthy sporting education guaranteed for all, regardless of race or sex or age, particularly through the promotion of cultural and sporting activities for young people..."

Panathletes shall identify the means to guarantee this education for the young people of their town, region and nation. This commitment involves everybody: the Central Organs, Districts, Clubs and individual Members. The "Panathlete's Charter" fixes the moral obligations of our members, and asks everybody to take action to ensure that a healthy sporting education is provided for young people in their area of competence.

It should always be noted that the sporting education recommended by Panathlon International must transmit:

- physical qualities, with the development of the body and its correct functioning;
- intellectual qualities, familiarity with sports and their rules and the awareness of the body and of what is required to keep it healthy;
- moral qualities, to form the character, to be in control of oneself and to learn fair play.

The educational process must be started right from the very first years of life both from the family, the school and sports clubs. Following the works already started and the numerous objections made in recent years, we realised it was necessary to pay great attention to the problems raised by the early introduction of young people in sports clubs and competitions, with all the risks this involves.

Furthermore, Panathlon International proclaims and defends a sporting ethics based on fair play. This ethics should define what is good and what is bad in sport and for sports people. The limits thus defined allow sport to preserve its fundamental virtues and its playful origin, while being an occasion for meetings, joy, recreation, friendship and psychic and physical health. Only under these conditions sport can be considered as an element promoting men, by starting from children.

Faithful to this proclaimed ethics, we deemed it essential to identify what is good and what is bad for the young when they practise or are urged to practise a sport. Hence the topic suggested by the Cultural Commission and accepted by the Central Board for the 10th Congress of Panathlon International in Avignon: “Youngsters and Sport”.

In the Spring of 1994 our Districts and Clubs had been invited to study this topic to try and identify which responsibilities should be shouldered by families, schools and sports clubs. Early intensive training, sometimes imposed on youngsters, had to be examined.

In June 1994, this topic was introduced in a lecture by dr. Lucio Bizzini, member of the Geneva Club, during Panathlon International Presidents' Assembly, held in Rapallo. In his lecture Bizzini presented “the Charter for Children's Sporting Rights”, of which he is one of the authors, and provided some important points of reference for the work that was to be done by clubs.

The 10th Congress of Panathlon International, held in Avignon on 19 and 20 May 1995 marked at the same time both the completion of the previously started works and, above all, following the achieved results, the starting point for future undertakings to the benefit of youngsters

and sport.

The spirit of Avignon and of its imposing Palace of the Popes reigned over the congress and had a positive impact on the work sessions, both when participants were divided per language group and during plenary sessions. Thanks to the remarkable studies by some Districts and Clubs, that would no doubt deserve to be published so that everybody may become aware of the high value of the speakers who shed an important light on this topic, of the commitment by the different group and assembly co-ordinators, and of the great interest of the participants in this topic, positive conclusions were drawn, collected and summarised in the “Final resolution” of the 10th Congress of Panathlon International.

From the numerous theses presented and the proposals put forward during plenary assemblies we identified seven recommendations which we deem essential for the family, school, sports clubs and associations. These recommendations deserve to be further developed as they form a corresponding number of guidelines that should echo wherever we can take action or urge measures.

Avignon was the expected and desired phase in the long path still to be beaten to transmit the message affirmed by the 10th Congress. Wherever there is a Panathlon Club, our “Final resolution” must be made known to political and sporting authorities, by organising joint meetings and seminars to convince parents, school and sporting managers on their responsibilities towards youngsters. This is a difficult and permanent work of which all the people involved at the different levels of competence must be made aware; a worthy task falling within Panathlon’s ideal.

The “Final Resolution” of the Avignon Congress indicates the path to be beaten. As Members of Panathlon International we must start moving along this path to the advantage of young people and sport.



Club Actions



1st District Trieste P.C.

The relationship between school, sport and family, associated with the problem of introduction to sport and early dropouts, are extremely interesting and topical issues for Sports Clubs and Federations.

The work co-ordinated by dr. Auro Gombacci, together with physicians Graziani, Tampieri and Tecilazich, wants to be a first contribution to the investigation into these complex interrelations, and is based on the analysis of the reality in Trieste supported by a questionnaire distributed to 200 young people aged between 11 and 14, both frequent and non frequent sporters.

Cross-checks between school results and sports activities, between motivation to practice a sport and finding rewards, or between sporting achievements and approval by parents and mates, have all been examined together with the interesting answers, sometimes very original and unexpected.

The dropout phenomenon, and frequent changes in sports have been analysed together with the awareness of the achieved results, or the failure to attain the preset objectives and related causes, the impact of physical activity on health, therefore obtaining a very interesting picture of the youth world.

As a whole sport and youngsters provide a positive general picture: entertainment, health, growth, education, socialisation, competition and commitment are the words with which the young interviewees defined their activities and therefore these judgements are reassuring.

Rovigo P.C.

In compliance with Panathlon International directives this Club chose to organise a written Contest open to all students of secondary higher schools in this province.

This work was done in co-operation with the Adria Club so as to cover the whole area of this province.

The active support of the Provincial Education

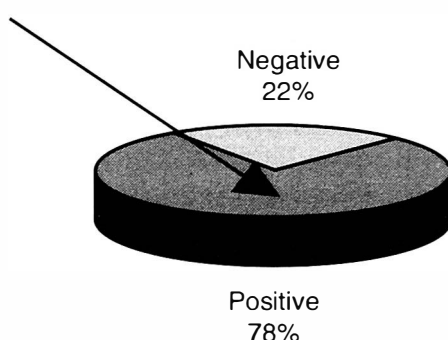
Office ensured a much greater participation than expected.

Let figures speak for themselves: 16 schools were involved out of 22 with the participation of 34 teachers and 291 students.

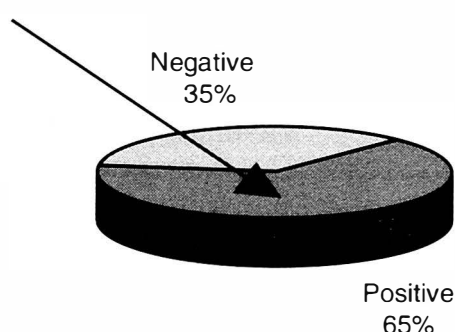
ADRIA AND ROVIGO PANATHLON CLUBS

STATISTICAL SURVEY ON THE LITERARY CONTEST "Youngsters and sport"

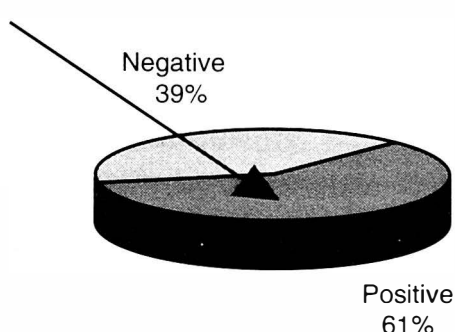
| Relations with the family | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Positif | Négatif |
| 141 | 37 |



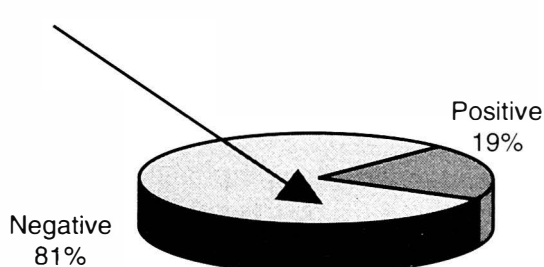
| Relations with the school | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Positif | Négatif |
| 89 | 47 |



| Relations with the sports clubs | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Positive | Negative |
| 109 | 70 |



| Early intensive training | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Positive | Negative |
| 25 | 104 |



DATA ON CONTEST PARTECIPATION

HIGH AND MEDIUM POLESINE

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| SCHOOLS | 12 out of 15 |
| TEACHERS | 22 |
| STUDENTS | 201 |

LOW POLESINE

| | |
|-----------------|------------|
| SCHOOLS | 4 out of 7 |
| TEACHERS | 12 |
| STUDENTS | 90 |

TABLE ON STUDENTS TAKING PART IN THE LITERARY CONTEST "YOUNGSTERS AND SPORT"

| SCHOOL | TOWN | DISTR. | No. STUDENTS | TEACHERS | No. ESSAYS | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------|--------------|----------------------|------------|----------|
| I. Alberghiero | Adria | 59 | 43 | Padovani M. Grazia | 20 | |
| | | | | Bellini | 9 | |
| | | | | Lavezzi Marinella | 7 | |
| | | | | Bertagnoni Raffaella | 6 | |
| | | | | Pallotti Gabriele | 1 | |
| L.C. Bocchi | Adria | 59 | 25 | Pozzati Luciana | 15 | |
| | | | | Bortolazzi Chiara | 6 | |
| | | | | Recca Anna | 4 | |
| I.T.C. Maddalena | Adria | 59 | 19 | Albertin Leila | 15 | |
| | | | | Brognara Elena | 3 | |
| | | | | Callegari M. Luisa | 1 | |
| I.T.I.S. Viola | Adria | 59 | 3 | Braghin Ornella | 3 | Tot. 90 |
| I.T.G. Bernini | Rovigo | 58 | 56 | Meletti Mirella | 41 | |
| | | | | Montaciani Licia | 10 | |
| | | | | Battocchio Giovanna | 3 | |
| | | | | Spoladore Margherita | 2 | |
| L.S. Paleocapa | Rovigo | 58 | 36 | Garbato Claudio | 19 | |
| | | | | Beccari Rosanna | 17 | |
| I.M. "Roccati" | Rovigo | 58 | 20 | Moscattello Rossella | 20 | |
| I.P.C. M. Polo | Rovigo | 58 | 19 | Pucci Paolo | 18 | |
| | | | | Ferretti Elena | 1 | |
| I.T.I.S. Viola | Rovigo | 58 | 18 | Andreotti | 18 | |
| I.T.C. De Amicis | Rovigo | 58 | 15 | Previali M. Grazia | 11 | |
| | | | | Silvestri Alberta | 2 | |
| | | | | Berto Gisella | 1 | |
| | | | | Boldrin Michelangela | 1 | |
| I.T.A.S. Munerati | S. Apollinare | 58 | 12 | Roma Natalia | 8 | |
| | | | | Coltro Beatrice | 4 | |
| L.C. Cello | Rovigo | 58 | 6 | Rossin Paola | 6 | |
| I.P.I.A. | Rovigo | 58 | 3 | Equisetto Luigi | 3 | Tot. 185 |
| I.T.C. Conti | Lendinara | 57 | 14 | Grossi Paolo | 11 | |
| | | | | Munerato Giorgio | 3 | |
| I.T.I.S. Viola | Badia | 57 | 1 | Tasso Susanna | 1 | |
| I.T.F. Einaudi | Rovigo | 57 | 1 | Marzola Patrizio | 1 | Tot. 16 |
| | | | | | Total | 291 |

Pieve di Soligo and Quartier del Piave P.C.

With reference to the “Youngsters and sport” contest, this Club operated as follows: the title of the essay was circulated in the secondary higher schools of the territory, a printed leaflet in a sealed envelop was handed out to 1064 students, naturally in co-operation with Headmasters and Teachers. 70 students sent their essays: the commission selected 5 of these and among these the winner.

2nd District

This District, at its 5th Congress held in Pavia, was directly committed on the topics of the 10th Congress of P.I. by debating on youngsters sports education within schools, correlated with sport associationism.

The above topic was debated on 22 April 1995, under the title “School sporting associationism”, presented by Prof. Siropietro Quaroni from the Pavia Club, an expert in this subject.

Some of the following conclusions were discussed and approved:

- recognition of sport as a cultural value;
- school curricula with extended motory training, to gradually introduce competitive sports;
- organisation inside the school similar to that of clubs, whose aim is to give youngsters the opportunity of experiencing group life and, above all, to homogenise programmes and coordinate activities;
- improvement and completion of Physical Education teacher's training;
- proper infrastructures and facilities to ensure youth activities, first ludic and later competitive.

This is what the 2nd District has decided to implement, with the active and rigorous co-operation of the Pavia Club that has also undertaken to circulate the document presented at our Congress among school central and peripheral operators, and among all other au-

thorities responsible for promoting sporting activities.

Brescia P.C.

Youngsters and sport this is the title of the conference organised by the Brescia Panathlon Club and by C.O.N.I.'s (Italian National Olympic Committee) provincial committee. The programme featured two speakers: dr. Carlo Tranquillini, federal doctor of F.I.G.C. and researcher at C.O.N.I.'s sport school in Rome, who spoke on "***Growth and evolution in the physical abilities of a youngster approaching sports***", and dr. Alberto Madella, graduate in political science and professor at C.O.N.I.'s sport school in Rome, who discussed "***Reasons for practising and for abandoning sports among youngsters***".

These reports clearly indicated the need to make these requirements well known to volunteers operating in the sporting world. Increasing coaches' and in particular managers' training appears to be essential.

Training however is not sufficient: the competitions adopted for youth categories play in fact a fundamental role.

Too often sport has been accused of giving too much importance to competitions, and it has been suggested to abolish or anyhow reduce them.

Paradoxically, the best path to follow could be another: the negative factor is not so much competition in itself as the dramatisation and the continuous "fixtures" of these competitions.

Introducing in regulations more competitions, but with variable rules and forms could help avoid their dramatisation and increase the number of times young people could feel satisfaction and perceive their success.

Continuous frustrations are one of the current limits to the further development of sports practice: this should suggest the adoption of a pedagogy based on success and motivation techniques discouraging excessive early selection.

A more correct approach to the problem can therefore be guaranteed only after more ap-

propriate strategies have been developed by sports organisations.

The individual operator, manager or trainer does however have a remarkable impact on the nature and duration in sports participation through his/her behaviour, attitudes and decisions.

Como P.C.

The activity of the Youth Commission started on 8 October 1992 with the conference "Sport education in elementary schools".

The speakers were dr. Antonio Daino, ("Aspects of developmental psychology"), dr. Guido Marcangeli, sports physician and Mrs. Renata Soliani, CONI's teacher in the programme "Basic motory education".

The didactic directors and teachers of Como's elementary schools were invited to attend.

Schools teachers from two different didactic centres were invited to attend, free of charge, an updating course on "Teaching movements - Teaching through movements", held by Mrs. Soliani in September 1993.

The teachers involved showed great interest and asked to be assisted during the school year to verify the correctness of their teaching.

This experience was reported in the book "Teaching movements - Teaching through movements", published in 1995 and sponsored both by our Club and the Pavia Club.

This interest in elementary school children led us to organise the "Gioco Sport" (Playing Sports) event held on 8 and 9 October 1994 in Como's public gardens, featuring the participation of 12 federations (athletics, badminton, canoeing, cycling, judo, gymnastics, orienteering, roller skating, basketball, volleyball, rugby, fencing) and about 300 children who tested their abilities in these sports under the supervision of qualified instructors.

The second edition of "Gioco Sport" was held on 23 September 1995, with the addition of other two federations, equestrian and tennis, and the participation of about 400 children.

Finally, the "Physical activity in childhood" conference was held on 19 October 1995 with the following lectures: dr. Massimo Testa "Physio-

logical aspects”, dr. Claudio Pecci “Psychosocial aspects” and Martino Ronzoni “Diagnosis and prevention of malformations using plantar supports”.

Cremona P.C.

To discuss the introduction of young people to sports in compulsory schools and in sports clubs, based upon the lecture of Prof. Maurizio Mondoni, a member of this Club and federal instructor at the basketball federation, a document was drawn up that can be summarised as follows:

- **from age 6 to 11** all individual and collective sportsgames should be presented, with the opportunity to practice more than one sport.

Parents must respect their children’s choices; doctors must guarantee the soundness of motory and sporting activities; instructors must make their knowledge available to trainees so that they may grow and be enriched by it;

- **after 11-12 years of age**, sports choices have been made (or almost made), motory and sports practice becomes more refined and the bases are established for a specialisation and authorisation of gestures and movements, training sessions are more frequent and the work load gradually increases;

- **from 15 years onwards**, beginning of top level training. Increase in the number of training sessions, correction is more constant, the work load and intensity increase.

School

Students of all school levels provide the largest number of possible users, therefore a correct basic motory education should be provided and pupils should be introduced to an educational sports practice.

Family

Parents should act as “buffers” against exasperated sport at youth level; they should advise, educate and not transmit anxiety and exasperated competition.

Conclusions

The primary aim in the sports education of children should not be that of turning them into champions at any cost, but rather to favour strengthening of their muscular, skeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, neurovegetative systems by practising a correct motory-ludic-sporting activity.

From games to sport-games and finally to sports: this is the path to be followed.

3rd District

Some Clubs, in compliance with the resolutions passed by the District Assembly of January 1995, organised several debates on this topic in the months prior to the Avignon Congress. This District sent four papers to the Avignon Congress delivered by three District speakers.

Prof. Attilio Bravi, president of the Cuneo Club, discussed school issues and held that communication with youngsters should be properly established, by offering them different stimuli, through diversified “experience” to create the correct education and culture that will contribute to the physical and intellectual “uniqueness” typical of man intended as a person.

The aim of the school is to give an equal opportunity to all students, including disabled students, to practise first a ludic-motory activity and later a sport. A correct planning should include all types and levels of schools, starting from nursery schools.

Dr. Piero Sandonnini, past-president of the Mottarone Club, put forth some proposals on the family, stressing how and why the family should encourage youngsters to practise sports, while guaranteeing them full conformance with the famous “charter of rights”. Every family member must therefore be absolutely convinced not only of the importance, but also of the need to practise sports, for the youngster’s health, but even more so for his spiritual growth.

Aldo Vané, president of the Vercelli Club, analysed the role of Sports clubs, that can be seen almost as a second family for the child, youngster or teenager if guided by competent, generous and unselfish persons who can provide the young with the necessary climate for their ethical and sporting growth.

As for early training, Prof. Carlo Molinaris, member of the Asti Club, stressed that the available means and programmes must be introduced with great care without anticipating subsequent stages.

The school must therefore have highly qualified personnel for young children, as it is the most prolific and constructive age, while sports clubs must critically review their way of interpreting sport for the young, by correcting phases and graduating their approach to competitions in order not to offer children a reduced adults' activity, but a specific activity for the different age groups that practice sports.

Alessandria P.C.

This Club invited psychologist Marco Chisotti to give a lecture.

Chisotti also pointed out that young people are subject to continuous growth and therefore need to be in contact with reality to avoid being relegated to an isolated niche, irrespective of the current state of things.

A growing child should not be deviated from his natural creative process, to avoid creating a big gap between himself and the world, because sooner or later this deviation will create negative consequences.

A youngster's esteem and his growth and live contact with reality must therefore be taken into due consideration.

Creativeness provides the will to continue and fantasy allows them to overcome obstacles and difficulties.

4th District Eastern Genoa P.C.

Motory education, guidance and introduction to sport must all be stages of a same course. This thesis is the basic structure of the "Amico Sport" (Friendly sport) Project, conceived by the "COM e Sport" association from Genoa.

Some of the members of this club are actively

participating in this project by promulgating it among its Members and by presenting it to the National committee for youngsters sports education. Co-operation in this project by sports technical staff, also after school hours, but with a consistent programme and common assessment methods, will allow the School to be the first place where a child's sports training and subsequent guidance takes place, while allowing for school facilities to be fully exploited, as recommended by the Ministry of Education.

The planned interdisciplinary assessment criterion prevents some psychophysical disabilities through an early identification of sensory deficits and/or psychomotor retardation.

This project intends to support nursery school teachers, first of all, and then elementary school teachers, with the correct training, methods and proper didactic tools so that they may autonomously and correctly provide for their students' motory education.

"Amico Sport" has been implemented in nursery schools in Genoa and in Riccione for three and two years, respectively.

The essential methodological lines being used have been published by CONI-Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana in the second volume of the series "Corpo, Movimento e Salute" (Body, movement, health).

LaSpeziaP.C.

The La Spezia Club contributed with the remarks by Dr. Glauco Forcieri, psychologist, who underlined that sport is often seen as a support for parents in their children's education; unfortunately, other times it is only seen as a parking area, and others still as a means to project on the children the goals or unachieved results of the adults. In this situation young people often make the fatal mistake of thinking that "defeat means being unsuccessful".

Sports clubs, while developing highly meritorious actions, often show other types of lacks that are sometimes added to parents intrusions.

Since sport implies competition, therefore a challenge, which does not encourage vi-

olence but requires early intensive training, serious and reasonable doubts are raised on the related psychological risks and negative tension.

Exasperation of results does not favour the growth of sports people and does not respect the children's world (essentially ludic), on the contrary it induces them to give up.

5th District

Starting from the papers presented at its Conference, this District drew up the following document to be sent to the provincial director of education of every city as a testimony of P.I. commitment in youngsters' sports education; of the attention P.I. pays to the school world; of the clubs' availability to support School organisations in all those initiatives deemed worthy of promotion.

"After a lengthy discussion and an in-depth examination at local, district and international level of the topic "Youngsters and sport", and after highlighting problems related to the youngster's early introduction to competitive sports, the Panathlon Clubs belonging to the 5th District reconfirm the important role of the family, of the School, of Sports Associations, of Federations and trainers so that sports are practised according to the requirements of the specific age groups; undertake to promulgate the Charter for children's sporting rights; reaffirm in particular the School's responsibility in:

- a) recognising the cultural value of sport;
- b) including in curricula sufficient time not only for physical education, but also for sports education;
- c) establishing non conflicting relations with sports Associations;
- d) examining the opportunity to form Sports Associations inside the school;
- e) guaranteeing the teachers' pedagogic, psychological and technical competence;
- f) establishing a dialogue with the youngsters' families on the correct sports education and on the guidelines to be followed in developing sports practice.

6th District

Carrara and Massa P.C.

When illustrating the topic, teacher Graziella Baracchini Muratorio specified “Nowadays children lead a very sedentary life. Sports activities, for their stimulations at cognitive level and for their strong social component, acquire a fundamental importance.

At this point the child’s biologic, physical and psychic maturity should be considered when introducing him/her to sports.

Furthermore, there is a whole series of negative components, often represented by the family, that sees the child always from a competitive point of view, and some parents even want to achieve through the child some of their unfulfilled desires.”

Grosseto P.C.

Prof. Franco Profico when reporting on the topic “Early intensive training” recalled that sport and physical exercise are necessary for the normal functions of the bones and for the cardiovascular and respiratory systems.

A regular physical activity maintained in adulthood, could be a sort of guarantee against heart ischemia.

On the contrary, an early intensive training may cause damages: achieving a result at all costs may lead to macroscopic mistakes in planning training and may consequently cause damages which are sometimes irreversible in a child’s development.

Dr. Gabriella Papponi Morelli, a Didactic Director, suggested the importance of an inter-institutional project.

The school alone cannot probably ensure the student’s harmonious growth.

A co-operation, each within its institutional role, is to be hoped for, so as to give children the opportunity to grow in the best possible way.

The interinstitutional project is being launched by different institutions: cities, provinces and schools and there are new perspectives also for associationism on the territory.

8th District

Molfetta P.C.

Firmly convinced that Sport is a universal message and that Sport for all is a precious occasion for the development of human rights, special attention was paid to the analysis and interventions on youth activity. Different initiatives were undertaken by this Club on the topic youngsters/sport, by creating opportunities of meetings and exchanging experience in Orienteering or in Traditional games and also by organising the “Concorso Panathlon Scuola” (Panathlon school competition) and the 4th edition of the “Panathlon Trophy”.

9th District

Trapani P.C.

The importance of sport in childhood and risks in intensive sporting activities were illustrated. The problem consists in assessing the adolescent’s psychophysical attitudes so that he/she may compete in activities more connatural to him/her, to avoid excessive strain, which may have a negative impact on his/her balance during the different growing stages.

A strict medical control is therefore necessary. This requires the presence of a paediatrician expert in sport pedagogics or of an expert in sports medicine well informed on the different stages of an adolescent’s development.

10th District

Lugano P.C.

The Avignon Congress held last March, and attended by our Club President Bruno Cocchi, was focused on “Youngsters and sport”.

A topical issue which certainly aroused the interest of the whole of Panathlon’s movement, all over the world.

We proudly stress that also recently this Club’s

Managing Committee has always paid great attention to youngsters and their sporting activities.

In the last few years, we have organised, together with the town's sports clubs, the "Youngster's day", featuring several sports: from swimming to basketball, from soccer to judo, and this year even athletics.

A "triathlon" event (running, launching of a bowl and long jump) held at the Cornaredo stadium, where about one hundred young people, aged between 10 and 13, competed. All events were highly successful and received the approval of participants, managers and parents. Special attention was, naturally, paid to the "playing" component, which prevailed over "competition", in compliance with the contents reported in the "Charter for children's sporting rights". The latter topic was exhaustively discussed during a social meeting held last year and featuring Dr. Lucio Bizzini as speaker. In recent years, our club actively supported those events that featured young people as protagonists, as in the case of the "Intercity games" a competition between the towns of Thorn-les-bains (France), Neuchâtel and Lugano and, last year, the 10th edition of the "Special Olympics" of basketball, held in Lugano, where more than 400 mentally disabled youngsters took part.

Solothurn P.C.

Twenty presidents from the most important cantonal and regional associations, representing a few thousand active athletes, including youngsters, accepted the invitation by this Club to take part in a debate on "Youngsters and sport".

Lukas Zahner, professor of Training Science at the Basel Sports School, was invited to give a lecture. The core issues focused on respect for the child's physical development and consequent adaptation of training, since the anagraphical age does not necessarily correspond to the biological age.

A wrong approach to sport or insisting at a too early stage on a single sport, may lead youngsters to abandon sport, with all the negative consequences this can have on their health. All participants were given a copy of the "Charter for children's sporting rights".

11th District

Montevideo P.C.

In order to improve sports practice and teaching levels, P.E. teachers' training is required, so that every physical activity (whether public or private) is guided by teachers with a diploma and by a technical staff with adequate pedagogical training for dealing with children. It is also essential to change those procedures that prevent children from playing and enjoying themselves; sport for children is a sort of game that contributes to their growth, so they must not be subject to overloading exercises or psychological pressure; in group sports they must be stimulated to cooperate.

Fundamentally, since a child starts walking, he immediately learns how to run, to jump, to launch and to climb.

Parents and teachers must stimulate him and not have expectations, they must let him enjoy his life and allow him to freely develop his creativity. As for the family, parents must be informed on the values of a correctly guided sports practice and they should be invited to introduce, for the youngster's global education, the concepts of fair play and observance of the rules. In our environment the National Baby Football Committee uses a slogan we think deserves being disseminated: "Daddy, mummy, let me play and enjoy yourselves too".

In Uruguay the Olympic Committee and the Central Board for National Education are both responsible for schools.

They have signed an agreement according to which the Olympic Academy will provide guidelines on educational principles at the level of elementary and secondary schools. Finally, in sports clubs and federations, dealing with children, sport responsibilities must be shouldered by pedagogic experts to protect youngsters from any attempt of "professionalism" or "aid with steroid drugs".

Rocha P.C.

Mrs. Adriana Sosa Varela, a panathlete teacher of physical education, presented a work where

she analysed the importance of physical education and sports practice in children and youngsters in general.

At the same time, when analysing the current limits in P.E. teaching at the level of children she made a diagnosis and suggested possible alternatives to improve and extend this teaching to all children and young people.

Santiago(Chile)P.C.

As for the analysis and dissemination, a text was drawn up - based on documents issued by UNESCO and related to policies and trends in physical education and sport - and sent to the General Management of Sport and Leisure Time, to the Ministry of Education, to the Olympic Committee and to the Physical Education Institutions of major Universities, and related to the following: the "Sports Manifesto" (Gieps, 1965), the "World Manifesto on Physical Education" (Fiep) and the "International Charter on Physical Education and Sport" (UNESCO, 1978).

This work considers physical education and sport as an integrating and essential component in the child's and adolescent's education and does not consider a youngster as a miniature adult, but takes into account all his evolutionary features, his interests, his motivations.

This work also stresses the positive influence the media, public authorities and specific non-governmental organisations should have in favouring physical-sporting activities, so that their educational value may become increasingly evident.

12 th District Juiz de Fora P.C.

Sport and infancy form an essential and vital interdependence, as the former finds in children the fundamental element for learning, assimilation and immediate and future results, while children need sport to sediment their psychic, physical and social development.

But in order to implement all this, sport must respect some fundamental criteria: an offer in

harmony with the child's physical and mental development; in harmony with its interest to encourage greater motivation; sport must be offered and not imposed as a form to meet parents' needs and not the child's desires; the child must have the right to decide which sport he wants to practice, if he has the necessary mental conditions to make such a decision; the child's performance must be assessed according to real results, associated with the recognition of the personal efforts made to achieve these results. Criticism is positive if based on facts and not on the adults' (parents, technical staff, teachers, family members, etc.) anxieties to reach certain goals.

In this way, and based on these principles, a child's growth can be ensured and sports practice within society in general can be further increased.

17 th District Avignon P.C.

Our commitment in favour of non violent sport was debated through the pages of a musical comedy by Katy Amaizo, "Rigolo Gym", produced by our Club.

Today the family has broken up, children don't have any points of reference any longer. Left alone to face life, for most of them violence is the only way out. Sport could replace the family structure and provide a solution for many.

A form of rehabilitation or education, by proving that the sportsman's rights exist through duties, where observance of rules is the core element.

The enforcement of laws in sport, just like in society, teaching the young to respect themselves, both on the playing field and in their neighbourhood.

The theatre group "Les Petits Molières", consisting in youngsters aged from 8 to 13 and living in Paris, 12th arrondissement, directed by Katy Amaizo, stages plays where daily problems and joys are evoked with humour and tenderness accompanied by an eclectic selection of music: "classic" is supported by "rap", waltz is transformed into rock. "petit rat" (apprentice

dancer) from the Opera dances with the “Cat’s” group from modern jazz.

ParisP.C.

Most probably, just like us when we first started discussing, every sportsman/woman will say: “Sport does not play a sufficiently important role in the education of youngsters. Their abilities are not given due consideration and are not exploited as they could and should be”. However, we decided to investigate further to see if the fundamental values of sport had been observed and defended.

We examined if men, peoples and their cultures were respected.

A more circumstantial and progressive approach on the introduction of sport in children’s education proved to be necessary. More progressive in the sense that a child must be helped right from the very first years to discover his body and to confront it with space and time so that he may understand meanings and details. He must learn how to play with his body, in order to add sensations resulting from using and mastering objects. All this must be to the service of one’s intelligence, pleasure and relationships with the others. But different children show different potentials, different roots, different cultural heritage. We should take into account all these differences. We cannot have only one type of education and a single approach to be used in all physical and sporting activities of all youngsters world-wide. We are well aware that teaching is not neutral and that likewise sport has its own characteristics, that can be summarised as follows:

- coding of a certain number of individual and collective physical exercises, which allow for a confrontation;
- (Individual and/or collective) determination to be successful, the best;
- competition as the final goal;
- social nature of sport;
- notion of a champion as a model and goal to be achieved;
- priority of style efficacy.

These values are not criticizable when considered individually as one can choose if and up to

what point they are to be followed. It is clear that they leave a mark on those who accept them and put them into practice, but this mark is not philosophically and culturally neutral.

We briefly outline the points of our proposals.

Culture

The cultural heritage in physical activities of the different peoples and regions have to be safeguarded.

Physical education

Teaching children a sport, first of all for the pleasure of it, safeguarding their spontaneous and youthful attitude, without turning them into adults ahead of time.

Sports rules

Make sure youngsters are not introduced too early in national and international competitions (by reviewing the rules of sports that imply early maturity).

Educating the young in schools

The rules of the game must be learned and explained to youngsters and refereeing must be an integrating part of education.

Information for parents

Promotion, among parents, of sport and of its values to explain its benefits and point out dangers in early intensive training.

Sensitisation

Public authorities are responsible for the role sport must have in youngsters' education.

The media

Fixing of formal deontological rules and diffusion of messages enhancing sporting values.

The medical staff

Sensitisation and support of the medical staff in denouncing and revealing risks and consequences in intensive training.

