

Looking for the “Athlete 2.0”: a collaborative challenge

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The past and present of performance and ethics in sport

For many years, athletes have been training as hard as possible to bring out their best performances, alongside receiving advice from coaches. In more recent times, advice has been delivered by more specialized individuals and even teams of physicians, nutritionists and psychologists. All of these support specialists were supposed to undertake their work ethically and with respect for their own professional code, but there have been many cases where support people have put money or even their own scientific interests before such ethical and professional codes. So, doping and other immoral practices appeared in an effort to try to beat the rest of the competition. In this respect, the athlete was often just a passive agent who did not ask any questions about dubious practices, including, sometimes, abuses in research ethics (Shepard, 2002).

After some big scandals emerged about doping (e.g. the Ben Johnson case at the Seoul Olympic Games, or the “Festina case” in the 1998 Tour de France), governments worldwide created different kinds of institutions and tools to fight against unethical practices (e.g. World Anti-Doping Agency -WADA, 1999-). But almost always, the punishment was focused on athletes, and rarely on other agents that should have shared some responsibility. It could be viewed that the athletes were victims of a perverted system. In recent years, such a view is less strong, since athletes now have much information and awareness about what it is ethical or not. The “false consensus effect” (Petróczi et al., 2008) that supports that “I can do it because others also do” is beginning to be resolved.

On the other hand, there is still a resistance movement in and around athletes whose objective is that athletes are not autonomous and thoughtful, and it can be called “the old school” (Lentillon-Kaestner et al., 2011). Maybe some professionals, or so-called professionals (with or without an academic title), still think that, if athletes know more, they may be replaced or useless. In

fact, this is just the thought of those who are not convinced of their own work and capabilities.

The need of working better with athletes

Nowadays, the demands to achieve success and the need of progression and improvement of the athletes’ performance are growing fast, so it is necessary to create an adequate working plan which is properly managed. Tools and ideas have to be developed with an appropriate methodology that takes into account the principal actor: the athlete. For that reason, we as professionals need to promote the best practices among athletes.

We must avoid people who use sentences such as: “don’t ask, just do it”, “there is no need of explanations, it’s me who knows everything”, “I don’t pay you to think”, “no new things, please, it is fine as we have always done”, “it has been done this way for ages, so it must be good”.

We must promote the collaborative work, which focuses on the athlete. So, everything is based on team work, which implies collaborative work between athletes, coaches, physiotherapists, team managers, doctors or psychologists. The common interest must be based on obtaining the best performance. This ideal team needs to work in an integrated way, not as an addition of parts, so that information can flow and the right answers can come easily.

The principles of the “Athlete 2.0” concept

All of the members, especially athletes as the center of the business, share the same principles of action to promote the “Athlete 2.0” concept (previously defined by Cycling Research Center -CRC, 2011- specifically for cyclists, but applicable for every athlete, as “Cycling 2.0” philosophy):

- The need to be better
- Curiosity, learning and teaching as a constant attitude
- Collaborative team work
- Multidirectional communication
- Participation on the training plan and process where the athlete is the main character
- Awareness of the latest advances and technologies in the field, trust in real science
- Knowing and understanding of what is being done, being aware of what is going on and why

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- Systematic, controlled, and regular work
- Fair play, clean practices without doping

Following these principles is the best prescription to get the optimal performance and educate the athletes at the same time. Furthermore, we are also responsible for promoting this concept.

The role of Journal of Science and Cycling

As another contribution, especially when cycling has been suffering the consequences of the “old school” in the past, Journal of Science and Cycling (JSC - www.jsc-journal.com-) is an Open Access online journal which will publish research articles, reviews, rapid communications and letters about all areas of Cycling or Triathlon sciences. The journal aims to provide the most complete and reliable source of information on current developments in the field, and it will focus on publishing high quality articles. Of course, this journal will be based on the “Athlete 2.0” concept, and will try to promote practical and useful knowledge in the field, suitable for professionals and “athletes 2.0”.

JSC will cover Cycling as a sport which includes a great variety of disciplines (i.e. Bicycle Motocross, Track, Trials, Mountain Bike, Road, Cycling for all, Para-cycling...), but it will also cover different aspects of Triathlon, which shares many other interesting domains with Cycling (biomechanics, physiology, nutrition, etc.). Finally, we cannot forget other subjects that take part in Sport itself, and also in Cycling and Triathlon, as gender, doping, healthy behaviors and their effects, environment, “Highway code”, etc. In conclusion, we will try to look at any issue that takes part inside or around these sports and can positively influence them to promote the “Athlete 2.0” concept.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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