

## EDITORIAL

"Yesterday Belenenses was better and won the Super Cup. Congratulations. Congratulations to the referee team, led by Pedro Silva, for the good work done. Congratulations, also to our boys, who gave everything to bring the trophy to Coimbra. The last season has been very hard, the demands of the high competition are huge, but we have a quality group that will match in the field and ensure that Académica is a top team of Portuguese Rugby for many years. But above all, special congratulations to our fans. Like Coimbra, they are a lesson of dream and tradition, indescribable in support, comfort and irreproachable behaviour!"

This was the post published on social networks by the Academic Association of Coimbra (AAC) after the defeat with Belenenses in the attribution game of the Rugby Portuguese Super Cup, in October 2018. The frontality and rationality of the post impressed me because, in current times, the good sense in a post-defeat moment it is rare in sport high competition:

- Recognition of the opponent superiority at that particular moment, "yesterday", immediately transmitting a message of prosperous future;
- Congratulation to the opponent team, as well as the referee team, reinforcing the "good work done", which at times of lower performance (unfavourable final result), is often referred to as the main responsible(s) for not achieving the proposed objective (victory);
- Congratulation to the players of their own team ("our boys") for all the work carried out up until that game, not focusing only on that specific/unfavourable moment, and immediately strengthening the group cohesion for the next challenges;
- Consideration for the "support" and "comfort" of the fans, even in the not-so-good moments (defeat), and recognition for their "irreproachable behaviour", making them aware of how important are the sports values, implicit along the entire post.

Through this introductory paragraph is possible to think over of the current sport practice and the role that Exercise and Sport Psychology should have, in both practical intervention and scientific research. My still short but uninterrupted 32 years of sport experience, first as a federated practitioner in individual (Athletics) and collective (Football) sports, then at a managerial level in sports clubs/associations, student (secondary school, bachelor's degree, master degree, PhD), sport coach/trainer in different aims (city council, health club, sports club/association), occasional practitioner of several activities (Swimming, Futsal, Snowboard) and, from 2007 until now, as a professor at School of Education of Coimbra-Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra (ESEC-IPC), allow me to look at the sport phenomenon under different perspectives.

I believe that sport have a universal language and the power to unify people, regardless of their beliefs or ethnicities, as reported by Nelson Mandela about the South Africa Rugby World Cup, in 1995. I admire the aesthetic beauty of competition, under the Olympic slogan *citius altius fortius*, and the constant need of new challenges or motivations, according to the Michael Jordan (Basketball) or Usain Bolt (Athletics) examples, which, although recognized by many as the best athletes of their modalities (at least) chose, after having achieved everything at the highest level, search for new experiences and test themselves in new sports, very different from those previously practiced, Baseball and Football respectively. I am fully aware of the great importance of: the new technologies applied to sport, both in the competitive and ludic perspectives; the economic impact that

a certain sport event can cause, positively or negatively; the pleasure withdrawn from the sport practice in new contexts, since health clubs to nature/outdoor activities (Trekking); the benefits of sport regular practice (guided by a qualified and competent professional), in concerns of general health and healthy lifestyle promoting, striking to public health problems, increasingly socially discussed; and, among many other aspects, I am fully aware of the importance of sport as an education "tool".

I consider sport as a micro-representation of much of what happens throughout our normal days, although in a specific context, providing the practitioner of emotional/relational skills for such everyday situations: a constant need of overcoming, especially in a great adversity moment; working together as a team, to the achievement of similar objectives for all the members of the group; the confrontation with an opponent (individual or collective), who in turn pursues similar but contrary objectives; the compliance and respect for a set of rules or regulations, mediated by a referee/judge, whose final decision belongs to him, although sometimes the practitioner's view does not coincide with his own. These, among others, are some examples that reflect in full the role of sport as an enhancer of more and better education and facilitator of more and better social relation/integration, embodied in the post initially shared by the Rugby section of the AAC.

But what could and should do Exercise and Sport Psychology to act at this level? The transmission of these important values from early ages, then transposed to an educational and social component, is only possible thanks to sport professionals (qualified in sports coaching), competent Physical Education professors (with a logic and philosophy of inclusion through the sport practice) and, in my opinion, the parents, who, over and over again, because of their excessive and untimely involvement, cannot perceive the negative impact they have on the sports, personal, emotional or/and social formation of their children. The scientific study of these relational processes, and consequent application in practical terms, is a pressing need of the current sport and educational context. How many parents put too much pressure on their children to obtain results, with reference to the actual sport idols Ronaldo and Messi? How many parents, antique practitioners of any sport, exaggeratedly encourage their children to follow the same sport, as having their descendants to finish something that was never completed by them? How many parents criticize a methodology followed by the coach or Physical Education professor, giving them incompetence label, contradicting and given a contradictory opinion about all their decisions? How many parents, publicly and in competition; fiercely contest the coaches' choices and the decisions of the refereeing teams, causing embarrassment and shame in their own children? How many parents use and abuse of physical, verbal and emotional violence towards opponents, refereeing teams, even the team itself and their own children?

These, among other issues, are at the core of this editorial note. Sport in an educational perspective will only present an extraordinary merit, in the transmission of values from an early age to the end of our lives, if the sports agents (coach and Physical Education professor) perform their roles competently, and parents are educated by them, in order to follow sport practice in a positive perspective, being a support and ally to achieve the defined objectives pursued by their children. It is urgent the study of these issues in the present, and this will be a challenge for the Exercise and Sport Psychology so that the future intervention is more proficient and coincident with the values that should underlie sport practice. That the Rugby section of the AAC was not an isolated example was what I honestly desire!

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