Chapter III

THE ROLE OF THE COACH

by Yuri Tchesnokov

The Role of the Coach

The role of a coach, his responsibilities, tasks and morale norms are important and crucial problems for me to review. Dr. Acosta, president of the FIVB, mentioned during a press conference in Prague in 1986, that, according to official statistics, 140 million people go in for organized volleyball. Organized volleyball means playing on a team with a coach (an instructor or a school teacher, or a physical training tutor). We can assume there are approximately 7 million actively working coaches in the world (140 million divided by 20).

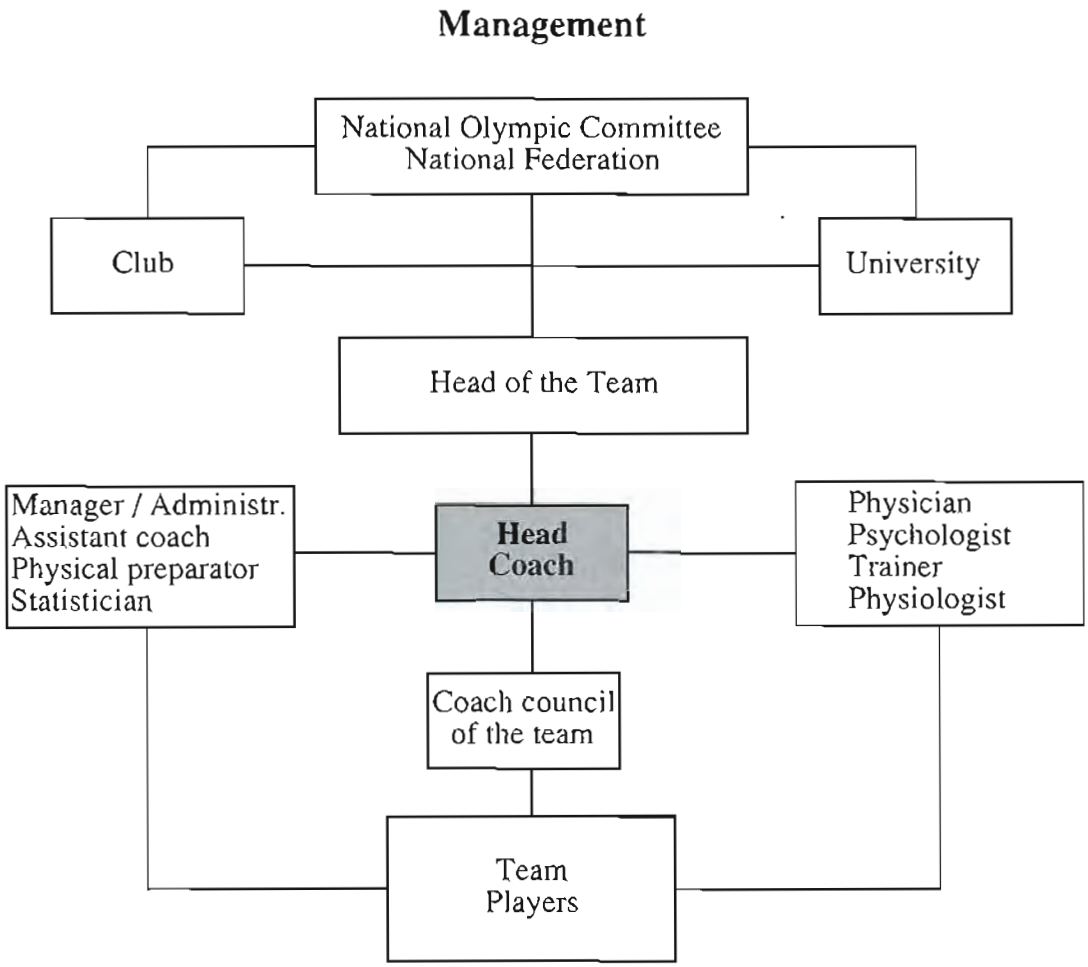
Even if we assume that some teams do not have coaches, we still have what amounts to an army of coaches :

Coaches of national teams
Coaches of club teams
Coaches of schools, colleges and universities
Coaches of children's teams etc.

The roles, the responsibilities, the tasks, and the levels of mastery of these groups of coaches differ greatly. I think you will agree that within the framework of this discussion, it is absolutely impossible, to even partially touch upon all the main problems involved in answering the question concerning the role and the responsibilities of the volleyball coach. Besides, this subject is mainly theoretical and scientific. I am a practical coach. I try to keep up with all the volleyball events and important volleyball articles in sports and volleyball publications. I do not wish to hide the fact that it was very difficult for me to prepare for this discussion. I tried to find a special book or article about volleyball under the same title and with the same content as in my topic. To my great surprise, I could not find what I needed.

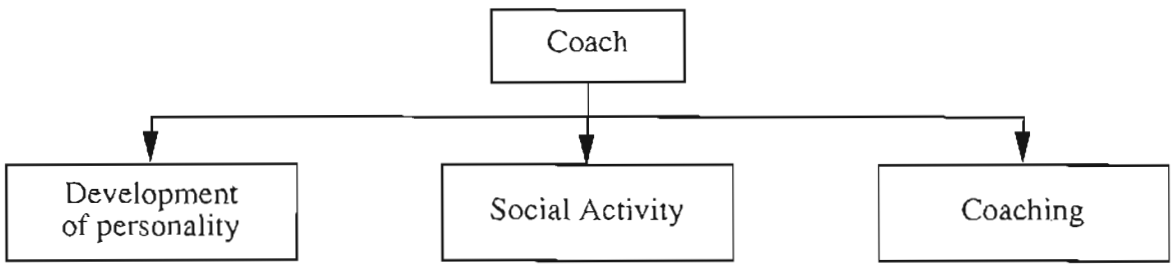
There was only one way left - to try to answer the standing question on the basis of my own practical experience in working with different teams. What does it mean to be a coach? What are his functions and role? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to look at the two following diagrams:

A Coach's Place in the System of management of a team



In each country and in each specific case this diagram can be altered. For instance, on children's teams only a coach and a doctor are needed; on national teams the whole staff should be represented; on club teams there is no need for a psychologist and a physical training coach.

The Major Functions in the Coach's Work



Certainly all these functions are closely interconnected and interrelated. The differences between these functions are often obscure.

Nevertheless, I think it is useful to have this diagram for further discussion.
Now let's try to answer the question, "What is a coach?" Looking at these diagrams, one can say:

A coach is a teacher and an educator. This is correct especially for a coach who is working with children and junior teams.

A coach is a person with a great knowledge of life. Players need advice and support in many different life situations. This is why one can say that a coach is a senior comrade and a life assistant.

A coach is a sport specialist. He works on the development and the popularity of volleyball in his own country, in a club, in a university, etc.

A coach is an organizer. One of his main duties is coordinating the work of all his assistants by keeping in touch with the management and the national federation.

These above-mentioned definitions of a coach's role are true. Nevertheless, I think we should answer the question, " What is a coach?" by taking, as a basis, the most important function, the major task and the most essential sign which is, from my point of view, the preparation of the team and the achievement of the result. This is why the best definition may be the following:

> **The coach is a professional head of a team who is responsible for the preparation and performance of single players or of a team as a whole.**
> **A coach is a person who is responsible for the result.**

Of course, it must be said that this definition is correct for the coaches of the average and high level teams. It seems to me that the specific feature of the coaches' work consists of the following circumstance: In comparison with other leaders of small groups of twenty-five to thirty people, a coach is a leader who makes a major decision and at the same time fulfills its realization. In other words, a coach is a leader who must answer two questions:

1) **"What is he to do?"** This defines the main goal and those problems which must be solved in order to achieve this goal. It means an analysis of the whole activity of a coach.

2) **"How is he to do his work?"** These are the means and methods which help in solving training problems in order to get the result. This means the individual mastership of a coach—his creative work.

A coach's main functions.

1. Development of personality:

This task is very important in the coach's work. The problems of development cannot be put within the framework of one team. A coach deals with young people—very often with school

children. As a rule, they work together from eight to ten years. The coach's influence on the molding of young players' characters is very often more than in school or in the family. In general, the coach partly decides the question of the development of the whole generation of our future. What can be more important and crucial than this task?

The most important task of a coach is not only to teach a young man to play, but to develop an upright and true man. Here are the main aspects of the coach's development work:

1. Molding of character (from the psychological point of view)
2. Courage: strong will, persistence.
3. Kindness: moral qualities of the personality, honesty.
4. Responsibility: being of principal devotion.
5. Collectivism: political qualities of the personality (civil) ideology.
6. Patriotism: fight for peace, internationalism and solidarity.

The question of development is a special topic. In our discussion we need not dwell upon details of pedagogues, but I would like to make some important remarks about the coach's work in this respect.

1. The process of the development of a player as a personality and a citizen is not any different from the general process of a team's work. It is absurd to say that from ten until twelve a coach teaches tactics and techniques, and from four until six he develops patriotism and honesty in his players. On the contrary, the process of development progresses with the help of sport, with the aid of sport training, through the permanent practical work of a coach and the activity of the whole collective.

   Each of the coach's words, his jests, every training team meeting is an act of development.

2. From a pedagogical point of view, the process of development is realized through the following system:

   educator (coach) - group (team) - pupil (player)

   It is very important that the team fulfills its development functions.

3. It is absolutely necessary that a coach, as an educator, should be well brought up and educated himself. His appearance, behavior, actions and decisions must be an example. There is a saying, " Personal example is the best teacher."

2. Social function (social activity of a coach)

The great social role of sports in the modern world is well known to us. Sports are one of the big social phenomenona. This is enhanced by the fact that sport is a sphere of knowledge, development and improvement of the man himself, his physical and psychological qualities. Sport is practically the only means of strengthening one's health. The great social function of sports is also in the following facts:

First, sports have no equal in the number of people in this sphere. There are the competitions (15,000 sportsmen take part in the Olympic Games). There are the number of fans involved in sports through the mass media (i.e. FIVB Volleyball World Challenge Match , China vs. All Stars, was seen live or delayed in sixteen countries by over 500 million viewers). There is no need to say anything about the millions of TV viewers watching the latest world football championship.

Secondly, sports has great potential in the struggle for peace and mutual understanding among nations, i.e. the Olympic movement. In this social aspect, volleyball takes first place in the system of world sports. Here are the facts:

- 177 national federations affiliated with the FIVB
- 140 million volleyball players
- Mini volleyball
- "Mama-san" volleyball in Japan
- Schoolchildren competitions in Japan
- For the match, USSR vs. Brazil, in "Maracana" Stadium on July 19, 1983, 95,887 spectators were present
- The president of the FIVB meets with leaders of the "Bachreum" (South Korea, Japan, China and many others).

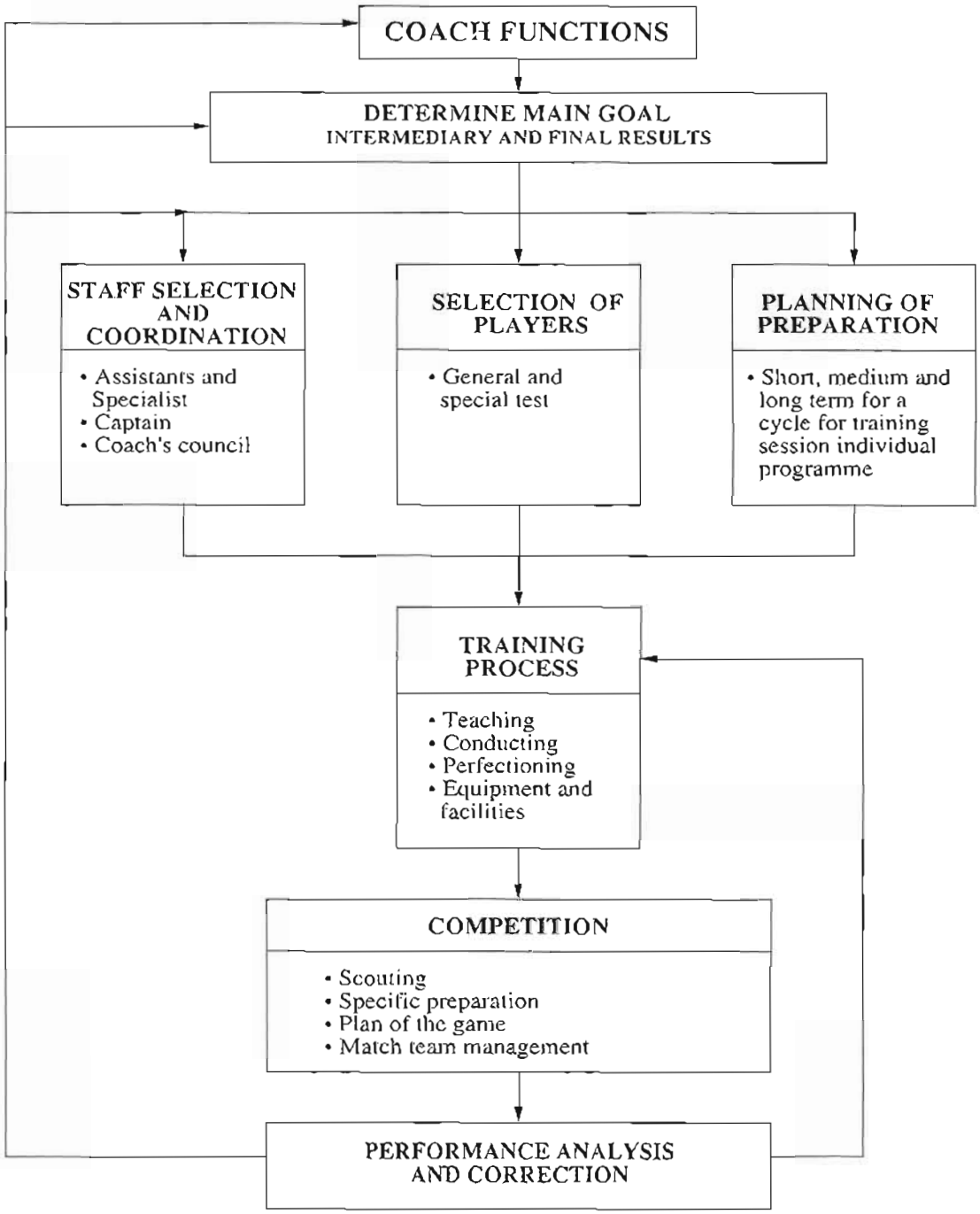
But FIVB wants to go further. There is the goal to make volleyball the number one sport in the world. The realization of this goal is only possible provided each volleyball coach, independently of his team's level, fulfills, very actively, his social function, namely:

Development and popularization of volleyball in his club, region and country.
Taking part in the work of the national federation.
Appearance in press and on TV.
Scientific research.
Giving assistance to other coaches and teams.
Organization of competitions.

Our meeting on these FIVB courses is a good example of the fulfillment of the coach's social function.

3. Sport training function - work (achieving a result)

Training is the most important function of the coach's work. This, as well as the level of his professional training, is judged by his team's quality of play. In other words, the team's result is a true measure of the coach's success (though there are a lot of exceptions). The major issues about the training function are included in the plan of our courses as separate topics. For example, planning techniques and tactics, skill of training etc. For this reason, I will only discuss the main directions of the coach's work in achieving the result. I will put this in a diagram and make some short remarks.



Remarks:

1. **The coach makes a decision while determining the main goal.**

   As a rule, the rank of his team is the result. In order to make the right decision he needs to make an objective analysis of the situation.

This analysis consists of:

- Tendencies in the development of the game.
- The time given to the coach to decide the main goal.
- Establishing the intermediate result which gives the coach an opportunity to check the correctness of his decision.

2. A coach must be very active.

He must have the right to choose his assistants and players. It is very important that the coach should make sure his players hold the same views for they are the people who play a creative part in the development of major decisions.

3. Questions of planning, preparation and competition must be under constant objective analysis (statistics, medical examination, videotapes).

Before ending this discussion, I think it is absolutely necessary for us to remember and thank our volleyball coaches. They are the ones who are responsible for outstanding sports victories and the major contributions to the development of world volleyball.

Theoretical formation of coaches

1988 Seoul Olympic Games Finals between Peru and USSR

1988 Seoul Olympic Games Finals between USA and USSR