1. Teamwork and cohesion

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1.1 From group to team: key aspects

1.2 Cohesion and teamwork

References

1.1 From group to team: key aspects

Introduction

We are used to hearing and talking about the importance of teamwork for achieving certain objectives. Likewise, we often hear that when an organization does not meet the established objectives, it is because of problems with teamwork. This can occur due to a lack of coordination among the members, a lack of communication, or putting individual recognition above that of the group achievements, etc. These types of challenges may occur in different work teams, regardless of whether it is a company, an NGO, a sports team, etc.

Coaches working in team sports must be aware of specific aspects of managing groups and sports teams. In this unit, we will address the following points:

- The difference between a group and a team as well as how to move from one to the other
- Roles and norms
- Conclusion

The difference between a group and a team as well as how to move from one to the other

The terms "group" and "team" are often used interchangeably or in similar contexts. However, there are some nuances that are important to clarify in order to discern between the two concepts and use them appropriately.

We make this distinction because it should be noted that all sports teams are groups; however, not all groups are teams. This is because there are certain characteristics that are common to both terms, but there are others that are unique to teams.

Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2002) defined the term "group" as two or more people who interact, exert mutual influence, and have a common objective. In the athletic context, we could use this term for a training group. Let's imagine a group comprised of ten track and field athletes who run the 100-meter dash and train together in the same club, on the same schedule, and with the same coach (they share space and time). These athletes interact with and influence one another. For example, if one runs a lot and is very concentrated on training, that may encourage another to do his or her best. The opposite may also occur; one of the athletes may want to chat more than usual and discuss things outside the athletic sphere, influencing others to change the dynamic of that day's training in some way. In addition, they all have an objective – in this case training in track and field. Nevertheless, some elements would be missing before one could refer to them as a team.

Carron and Hausenblas (1998) defined the term "team" as any group of people who interact among themselves to achieve common objectives. Therefore, in teams, we also find the characteristics of mutual interaction and interdependence, just as occurs in groups. However, there are other relevant aspects needed in order to consider a group of athletes a team. These include the following characteristics (García-Mas, 2004):

- There is a sense of belonging to the team and a collective identity. In other words, the group members identify more with "we" than with "I."
- There are different roles within the team, and each of the members know what they must do and what their part is within the team.
- There are structured models of communication, so the information channels are clear and formal.

- There are concrete norms, that is, certain social rules that tell people what they can and cannot do within the team.

The transition from being a group to being a team is a process; thus it requires time and has distinct stages that must be passed through. Tuckman (1965) proposed four stages for a group to become a team and carry out its objectives. Later, he added a fifth stage (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). They are explained below:

1. Forming

This is the first stage and it is characterized by the members not yet knowing each other and beginning to become acquainted with one another. They establish interpersonal relationships, make social comparisons among themselves, and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Generally, they behave as individuals and attempt to stand out, but they also want to avoid conflicts and not create internal debates, which shows the team's lack of maturity. Although they are highly motivated, they do not yet know the team objectives well, nor the problems or difficulties they will face.

Figure 1: First division team, new members

Source: Victor Salgado - FC Barcelona, 2018-2019 Personal file, unpublished.
Figure 1 gives an example of this forming stage. Here, we can see the incorporation of one of the new members drafted to join the team for FC Barcelona's 2018-2019 season.

2. Storming

In this stage there is more trust among the group members, and they also begin expressing their opinions more often. This makes it easier for the team members to question or discuss other team members' actions or opinions; including the leader's, which is the coach in this case. This is an uncomfortable stage, but it is necessary for the progression of the team's performance. Here, it is crucial that we take certain actions to manage this stage correctly, facilitate team members' ability to express their opinions and feelings and, at the same time, learn that constructive criticism is a tool that promotes team growth and the achievement of shared goals. The role of the coach is very important in this stage, since he or she must be attuned to the disagreements that can arise and manage them with the team. If, on the other hand, teams fail to manage such conflicts, the storming stage may last too long and create very negative relationships or dynamics among team members; this leads to a drop in motivation that can be difficult to turn around. The following unit will explain a practical proposal for managing the team during this stage and create better cohesion among its members.

3. Norming

This begins once the storming stage is completed. The members have learned to express themselves and understand themselves better. They also accept the different personalities and opinions and are aware of their own biases toward the other members. Although conflicts may still arise among the members, there is a general feeling of cooperation aimed at taking on a common objective. Each member knows what their responsibility is and works to achieve the success of the team. Sometimes, members may fear expressing their opinion to avoid returning to the storming stage.

Figure 2: team and unity

Source: Victor Salgado - FC Barcelona, 2018-2019 Personal file, unpublished.
This photo exemplifies a team of players working together to achieve a common goal, which is symbolized by all of them gathering and forming a huddle.

4. Performing

This stage is characterized by the team members being motivated and competent, working autonomously and responsibly, fulfilling their roles, and trusting that their teammates will also do so. Here, team members have learned to manage the conflicts that can occur in the team – a result of progressing through the previous stages. In order for this stage to occur, it is extremely important to clearly establish the team's norms and roles, which also brings the team greater levels of success.
It should be noted that not all work teams are capable of reaching this stage, and those who do reach it do so because they learned to manage conflict, overcome challenges together, and acquire different skills, including assertive communication, empathy, and the ability to adapt to new situations and changing contexts. In addition, any important change (i.e. a coaching change or the incorporation of a new team member) may cause the team to return to one of the previously discussed stages.

Figure 4: Team and successful performance

Source: Victor Salgado - FC Barcelona, 2018-2019 Personal file, unpublished.
This photo attempts to illustrate a team that is situated within the performing stage. It shows a roller hockey team that has won several titles in recent seasons.

5. Adjourning

This is the last stage, which was added in Tuckman's later work (Tuckman, 1965). Here, the team has reached its goal – either it has fulfilled the purpose for which the team was created or the time for doing so has ended. For example, in sports we can imagine that the athletic season has ended and the team, with all of its members, disbands. At this point, there will be players whose contracts will not be renewed, who will voluntarily change teams, or who will retire from sports.

Often times, the season ends and the fifth stage is not conducted at all; time simply goes by. But it is important to keep in mind that it may be a very stressful stage for the members and that it may involve traumatic situations both for those who stay and those who do not continue with the team. It is important to plan for this stage with as much time as possible so that the players who will be moving on can relocate with another team, or even within the same team but in a different role.

It would also be beneficial to point out the achievements that the team has reached together, as well as each team member's contribution toward those common goals. In this feedback, we should mention the personal and professional aspects that are important, such as the pride or enjoyment in having shared so many situations, difficulties, or joys during the team's time together.

In terms of the stages outlined by Tuckman (1965), it is important to underscore that a group can remain in one stage for its entire duration, progress through all of them, or experience them in a non-linear order depending on the specific case, as mentioned earlier. In addition, the team can move forward or backward, as the changes that occur in the interpersonal relationships during the evolution of a group generally prevent it from moving progressively and linearly.

Another aspect that helps a sports group make the transition to being a team is the physical proximity that occurs over time. We can also mention other objective elements such as the team's equipment, the field of play itself, and sharing clearly established objectives to achieve a greater personal identity when the team confronts or differentiates itself from other teams (García-Mas, 1996).

Roles y norms

We have seen that having team norms and clearly defined roles are crucial for the team's ability to perform well and achieve the objective(s) for which the team was formed. Thus, on the structural level, in order for a group to become a team, it must develop certain characteristics – especially its roles and norms. Below, we will explain these concepts in detail.

ROLES

NORMS

A social role is what an individual is expected to fulfill. In terms of the role athletes have within a team, we expect them to behave in a certain way. For example, if a member is the team's captain, he or she is expected to behave as a role model, be punctual, be committed to the team, be a representative for his or her teammates, etc.

Two types of roles may be assigned within teams: formal and informal ones. Formal roles have to do with a specific space that the team member has been officially assigned to occupy – for example, being captain or playing a certain position on the field (goalkeeper, left or right back, forward, etc.). Among the informal roles, we could mention being the "life of the party", the "pessimist", the "veteran", or the "rookie." These informal roles may evolve as the dynamic of the team changes.

For a team to function, all of its members must have a very clear understanding of their formal roles. That way, they will know what is expected of them, what roles they play, and where their responsibilities end and those of another teammate begin. In addition, it helps the athletes understand the indicators by which their work and contribution to the team will be evaluated.

When roles are not clearly defined, new difficulties tend to arise for the team as a result of this role ambiguity. This situation is associated with a cognitive state of anxiety in the athletes, which those who play offensive positions generally suffer (Weinberg & Gould, 1996).

Sometimes, certain circumstances – for example, when a player suffers from a long-term injury – require team members to move from one role to another. Let's imagine a football player who is normally a central midfielder who, due to a teammate's injury, is asked by the coach to switch to the role of central defender. In order to avoid any role ambiguity, it will be crucial for the athlete to understand the specific functions and tasks that are required by the role. For this reason, the coach must clearly define the role and be as concrete and as explicit as possible when explaining the functions and the scope of the player's new position. Generally, role ambiguity tends to decrease as the season progresses.

In addition to the above-mentioned example, something called "role conflict" may also occur within teams. This happens when a player clearly understands what is expected of him but does not agree with it and thus does not accept it. If we consider the previous case, the athlete in question may not feel comfortable in the new position and might ask not to take up the role.

Another situation that generates role conflict is playing the role of a substitute rather than a team starter. This area is difficult for many coaches to manage and especially hard for players to accept. In these situations, coaches could make an effort to define certain situations in which the athlete could perform on the team, even if it is as a substitute.

Let's look at another example that will clarify this idea:
George is a handball goalkeeper (the substitute goalkeeper), but he has been assigned as the goalkeeper for penalty throw situations. Therefore, even though he receives little playing time, he knows what his role is and feels very valuable to the team, since stopping a penalty throw or not can determine whether a team wins or loses a tied match, or even a final.
Coaches are encouraged to emphasize (both with words and actions) that all roles are necessary for the team and that, therefore, everyone should be equally valued, recognized, and respected. If we want a team to function successfully, all parts are necessary, since everyone has a role to play and everyone can be extremely useful in the situations where they are required. In addition to stressing the importance of each role, feedback should be given to each player, with recognition of the player's performance of his or her tasks.
Let's imagine a metaphor for the sports team as a toolbox. Normally, the carpenter reaches for the pencil, the hammer, studs, nails, and the ruler for any given project. However, that does not mean that the rest of the tools in the box – such as the pliers, scissors, sand paper, and spikes – are less important or less useful. It simply means that the carpenter will use them in other pertinent situations, such as hanging a picture. Something similar can occur with a coach. It is important to evaluate the specific abilities and skills of each player to know the particular situations in which each one can be relied on and identify who will be the best fit in terms of their personal qualities. In this way, the coach will have the opportunity to put the competencies and skills of each player into practice.
When athletes know what they have to do and for which specific situations they will be needed, they are more likely to feel competent and thus, more motivated. Giving them autonomy and offering them an independent way of working will make it easier for them to accept their role and not feel as though they depend solely on the control and direct supervision of the coach.

ROLES

NORMS

Team norms can be established formally or informally. This element makes it easier for team members to follow a shared pattern of behavior, since norms exert a certain pressure on team members to comply.
When they are not officially established, but a group exerts social pressure on its members, we have informal norms. On the other hand, when we are looking at norms established officially by the coach or the club itself, we have formal norms.
As an example, the former may be related to areas in the locker room or even the seats in the video room where pre-match preparations take place. Every player has their usual seat, and if someone new sits there, the group might react in different ways to make that person realize that he or she should not sit there since the spot belongs to another member – even though there is no written rule stating that.
Formal norms can be established in different ways based on the coach's leadership style. They may have a more or less participatory style according to how they are instituted. For example, coaches with a more authoritarian leadership style may write their own rules for their athletes, including behavioral expectations and subsequent consequences if not followed. Then, they will give the document to the team members to sign, thus indicating their commitment to observe and comply with the established norms.
Other coaches who invite some level of player participation in the process of creating the team norms, but who also want to ensure that certain key elements will occur within the team, will likely make a first draft of the rules, thinking about which points are negotiable with the players. They will give the rules to the players and, finally, will propose a meeting to discuss the items the players want to negotiate and determine what concessions or changes the coach is willing to make.
Lastly, coaches with a more democratic style may carry out a completely participatory process: they will think of some items that should be included in the rules and propose them to the players (e.g. dress code, punctuality, food, rest, unacceptable behaviors, etc.). The coach will also be open to including other topics that the team deems important to include in the rules. Finally, the coach will open the discussion on what the norms for each of the proposed items should be and will establish – together with the players – the fair consequences for not following them.
Generally, this third process for defining norms generates more autonomy and a feeling of responsibility among the athletes themselves. It makes them feel like participants in the creation of the team's norm, and as such, they are more likely to view the rules as important and feel that the rules represent the team – more so than in cases where players are less involved in the process.
Sometimes, the coaches themselves or the players may propose certain norms that, in actual practice, are hard to follow, because the consequences are either excessive or unrealistic. On other occasions, at the time when the infraction occurs, the coach may decide not to apply a given rule to a player due to the latter's importance to the team's results. These examples should be avoided at all cost, since it is important for the norms to exist, to be coherent, and to be applied consistently. Otherwise, instead of promoting team cohesion, the norms could create more conflicts or feelings of injustice among the members.
The coach and the rest of the staff also have their norms and should be role models when it comes to fulfilling them; in the case of an infraction, they should self-apply the agreed-upon consequences.
In addition, in professional teams, when athletes join a specific club, there are certain norms incorporated into their contracts that they must comply with, even if they are not voiced by the coach or agreed upon by the entire team.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this unit we have reflected on some of the differences between simply being a group or being a team, as well as the evolving dynamic of the group as it becomes a team.

We also highlighted the importance of clearly establishing the formal roles and norms of the team. On the one hand, doing so prevents role ambiguity and encourages attentiveness in managing any role conflicts that may emerge; on the other hand, these serve as a clear and formal guide for the team and the coach to follow, providing a common reference in the case of any infractions that may arise.

CONTINUE

1.2 Cohesion and teamwork

Introduction

We use the word “cohesion” often, but what exactly do we mean when we talk about it? Is there more than one type of cohesion? Is team cohesion important for achieving good results in sports? Do we know how to develop cohesion with the sports teams with whom we work?

All of these questions will be answered after reading this unit. Thus, we will address the following points:

- Cohesion: What is it and what types are there?
- Practical suggestions for working on cohesion
- Conclusions

Cohesion: What is it and what types are there?

Let’s start by defining what we understand cohesion to be. Carron (1982) defined cohesion as a "dynamic process that reflects the group tendency to stay together and remain united in pursuing their goals and objectives." It is a dynamic process because it is something that fluctuates: at the beginning of the season we may find an incohesive team, but at the end of the season we will find that they are very cohesive, or vice versa. This may occur, in part, because the dynamic of the season affects the team and its members individually (e.g. victories, failures, playing time, etc.). In addition, there are other aspects outside of sports that may affect the team dynamic on an emotional or cognitive level.

Cohesion is a multidimensional construct, as it incorporates both social cohesion and task cohesion. The former refers to the degree to which the members get along and enjoy being together, while the latter indicates how well the team works to achieve their shared objectives.

If coaches want to generate high level of task cohesion within their team, it is important that they perform actions that promote the commitment and involvement of the whole team to achieve the proposed objectives. Thus, the following will be very important:

- all of the athletes clearly understand and share the team's objective
- all of the members know and accept their role within the team (discussed in Unit 1 of this reading)
- all the members collaborate and have the commitment necessary to achieve the objectives or goals established by the team

In terms of the last point, it is important to mention the Ringelmann effect, also known as “social loafing.” This comes from an experiment that Ringelmann carried out in the 1980s in which he observed that, in a tug-of-war, the individual effort of each member decreased as group size increased. He concludes that in activities requiring a group effort – that is, where the individual contribution is added to that of all the other members – people do not work as hard as they do when performing that same action or task on their own.

As an exclusively sports-related example, this often happens in synchronized swimming when the swimmers underwater have to lift another teammate out of the water to perform a jump or move out of the water. Social loafing causes them not to exert the effort needed for the jump to have the required height; thus, the swimmer performing the jump may fall badly or have a bad entrance into the water.

As you can imagine, its consequences are serious because they put a teammate at risk physically, in addition to executing the task poorly. Likewise, it demonstrates different degrees of commitment and effort among the athletes, which can generate conflict.

It is important for coaches to be aware that this effect exists, especially in tasks that require individual team members to contribute toward the group effort. Consequently, it will also be important for coaches to approach this issue with the team, so that the athletes are aware that this is a common phenomenon, one which is important to overcome for the team to have strong task cohesion and improve its performance. In addition, when athletes are aware that their effort is being monitored by their coaches, that is, that their individual contributions to the final team result are directly monitored, this helps reduce social loafing. On the other hand, social loafing increases when the individual result cannot be evaluated independently, it is not seen as important to a specific task, an athlete has low commitment, they perceive that their contribution is redundant, or they compete against someone who is seen as a weak opponent (Weinberg & Gould, 1996).

Determining specific situations in which the coach anticipates social loafing and sharing them with the athletes, explaining the Ringelmann experiment, and reflecting on the possible consequences of these events (both positive and negative) as a team may be a good initial exercise for approaching this issue. On the other hand, scheduling individual meetings with the athletes who show this type of behavior will be necessary in order to know why they are not playing their part (not cooperating), asking whether it is happening due to a loss of motivation, because they assume someone else will do the work, or because they do not know how to act when there are a lot of people performing the same task. If we know how the athlete feels, it will be much easier to help them.

Figure 8: Synchronized Swimming

Source: [untitled image of synchronized swimming] (n.d.). Retrieved from https://taurangasynchro.co.nz/
In this image, we can observe the moment when the swimmers are prepared to lift one of their teammates. They all must exert a lot of effort in order for the jump or position to be performed at the greatest height possible.

It is also important for cohesion that all the team members maintain relationships of trust with one another. In this sense, suggesting and planning activities during the season that promote positive interaction and contact outside of the athletic activity itself may greatly help increase social cohesion and create bonds of trust among the members.

Different activities and dynamics may be proposed to increase social cohesion – some more elaborate than others – but all can help if they are seen as activities which strengthen the interaction among the different team members and which allow them to get to know each other better. Some examples of these suggestions are:

- Having a pre-season stage so that the different team members can meet each other and share time and experiences before entering into a competitive dynamic.
- Plan post-match or team dinners or lunches at specific times during the season.
- Take advantage of special dates to celebrate and plan interactive and social activities, such as “Secret Santa” accompanied by snacks.

- Go to an escape room with the entire team.
- Have a calendar with the birthdays of all the team members; wish them a happy birthday and agree that each person will bring something to share with the team on their birthday.
- As part of training, plan some fun, relaxed activities that require eye contact and physical proximity.

For years, different researchers have looked into the relationship between cohesion and performance. For example, authors Tutko and Richards (1971) identified that mutual respect among team members, effective communication, feelings of importance, shared objectives, and respectful treatment are important factors for performing well in sports.

Other authors studied the opinions of players from teams that had been successful in their performance and affirmed that social cohesion and task cohesion were significant factors for that success; other factors included player characteristics, the coach's leadership, team identity, and style of play (Orlick & Partington, 1988; Partington & Shangi, 1992).

To look at more recent studies,Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Stevens (2002) completed a meta-analysis in which they found a significant positive relationship between cohesion and athletic performance. They demonstrated that both programs geared toward achieving social cohesion and those that seek to achieve better task cohesion are beneficial. It is important to note that they found cohesion to have a greater impact on performance in female teams. Thus, this work seems to indicate that it is more important to work on this area with women's sports teams.

It should be noted that a meta-analysis is a methodology involving the systematic and quantitative review of different published articles, and that it is well-established in scientific research. It is based on techniques for accumulating rigorous information on empirical studies that have been published about a single topic – in this case, the effect of cohesion on athletic performance.

Cohesion is also important in groups that are formed for training sessions. At the beginning of the season, coaches should include actions to work on team cohesion within their planning, since it will generally be easier to do one thing or another depending on the part of the season they are in. However, this does not mean that non-scheduled activities should be off-limits for the team; due to the changing dynamics of the season, new situations can arise and we must manage these in order for the team to move forward and continue to improve, both as athletes and in terms of their psychological well-being.

Below, a table has been added as an example for planning actions that strengthen team cohesion, and which should be kept in mind throughout the entire season. If we want a team to function, in addition to the work and athletic training, the members need to cultivate relationships among themselves and complement each other in order to achieve their objectives.

Table 1: distribution of actions

Actions	Month number									
	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
Pre-season stage	x									
Team meal		x		x		x		x		x
Social cohesion dynamic			x				x			
Task cohesion dynamic		x			x			x		
Secret Santa					x					
Birthday celebrations for team members	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Other suggestions								x		x

Source: Prepared by the author

Practical suggestions for working on cohesion

There are many group dynamics that may occur and that help strengthen both social and task cohesion. In this section, we will look at a couple of them, merely as examples, since many other similar suggestions could be made to strengthen the same aspects (i.e. interaction, cooperation, communication, spending time together, etc.).

Suggestion 1

Title: Team trip! / Let's get away!

(It is important to choose an intriguing name so it will be attractive to the athletes and they will want to do it)

Task: the different members of the team make a roadmap for a trip or getaway to take place at a given time and with a previously agreed-upon budget. This way, it will be an activity that they themselves can carry out at the end of the season or when the team thinks it is a good time to do so. Other versions may be suggested in terms of the characteristics and needs of the team members (e.g. smaller or larger budget, older or younger team members, more or less free time, etc.).

Duration of the dynamic: approximately one and a half hours. Based on the size of the team and the time available for the activity, the duration may be longer or shorter, and the team may be asked to plan more or fewer items on the agenda.

Dynamic:

- Explain the objective of the dynamic (5 minutes)
- Explain the instructions to follow, along with a printed resource to make it easy for the team members to read during the explanation (5 minutes)

Instructions

Organize a roadmap for a day trip (include the time stipulated).

Choose and plan the following aspects:

- Where to go (the destination may be freely chosen or the staff may provide 3 or 4 sites from which the group must choose).
- How to get there (for example, renting a bus, using public transportation, or having each person take their own vehicle). For each case the following must be evaluated: travel time, money needed for fuel, and possible tolls (if traveling in private cars); public transportation schedules, any transfers needed, ticket prices; or, in the case of renting of a bus, the rate for the rental and the company to be hired.
- Where you will eat: look for different places for breakfast, lunch, snack, and dinner. Specify the type of restaurant chosen and the type of food served there.
- What you will do during the day: what leisure activity can be done in this place? (Think of an activity that allows interaction and is not athletic.)
- Where will you sleep? (If it is a weekend trip, you must find a hotel or hostel to sleep in, considering the number of rooms, price, etc.)

Some general considerations:

- Each person in the group must have an assigned task in the planning dynamic.

- You are free to organize yourselves however you find it most efficient.
- You may only use two cell phones, computers, or devices with Internet access to organize and plan the trip. You may consult them twice during the activity for a maximum of 5 minutes (depending on the number of athletes completing the dynamic, the number of devices may be increased to facilitate the search).
- You must respect the budget and not go over on it, although money may be left over.
- You have 50 minutes to complete the dynamic.

- Developing the activity (50 minutes)

Here the coaches can reflect on different aspects of the dynamic, so they can work on them with the team in athletic situations later on. Below are some points to be aware of:

Table 2: Approaches

Teamwork	• Level of each athlete's involvement. • Whether they help each other. • What each person contributes.
Organization	• How the tasks are distributed. • How the time is managed. • What roles they have.
Communication	• Type of communication among them (with whom). • Do they share clear, positive, important information? • Do they speak and listen?
Leadership	• Are there leaders? • How do they emerge? • How do they manage the group?

Source: Prepared by the author

- Discussion and closing (30 minutes)

At this point, the team is asked to present the roadmap they created during the development of the dynamic. Based on the experience, a more reflective process may be opened for them to share different aspects related to the activity and consider how they can transfer this experience to their sports practice.

Some of the prompts for reflection may include:

- How did they feel when participating in the activity?
- What difficulties did they encounter?
- What resources did they use to achieve the objective?
- How did they divide the work?

- What was their coordination and organization like?
- What was their communication like?
- What could they have done better?
- What have they done well?
- What aspects can they identify that also occur in the athletic context?
- What do they take away from this activity?

The main objective of this dynamic may be to generate social cohesion by planning a trip or getaway to spend time together outside of playing sports as a team. However, it may also be utilized as a subsequent dynamic geared more toward achieving task cohesion, emphasizing structural elements of the team such as its norms and roles.

The aim is to create a very interactive dynamic so that the athletes can then use the trip dynamic as a metaphor for their team and reflect on the following:

- **What is the team's journey:** in other words, what is its objective, and where do they want to arrive? It is important for the team's objective to be identified not in terms of the result or expressed in other sports-related terms; rather, it should be a performance objective, one based on the task.
- **How will they make the journey:** how will they get there and what do they need in order to achieve their objective? This could be reflected in the individual and group commitments that the team defines as necessary for reaching the goal.
- **What is each member responsible for:** the way in which the tasks were divided; here we can address the issue of the roles for each team member. What is the responsibility of each person and how far does it go (what role clarity do they have)? What can each person contribute to the team? Purely athletic aspects may be mentioned here (for example, Alberto contributes three-pointers, Gerard contributes defense, Fran is the penalty shot expert, etc.). It can also include other more intangible – though no less important – roles (e.g. Pedro brings intelligence to the team, María brings a constant fighting spirit, Antonia brings calm when we need it, etc.).
- **What are the norms:** in planning the trip, there were norms to follow, and they exist in the team as well.
- **What are the leisure activities:** that is, what social activities may be planned throughout the season to strengthen interpersonal relationships outside of training and matches.

It is important to be able to note everything expressed after this dynamic to follow up later and evaluate how daily tasks are carried out.

Suggestion 2

Below, we will present another suggestion – one which has a very different style than the previous one, but which also serves to work on team cohesion. This type of dynamic could be done when a team is in the storming stage in order for them to see that the coach is concerned with the situation and wants to establish communication to get through this stage, to grow, and to iron out rough edges.

Title: This dynamic is known as "Bull in the ring" and is explained within a chapter of the Routledge Handbook of Applied Sport Psychology (Stephanie Hanrahanan, 2010). In Spanish, it is called "El círculo" (the circle).

Objective: this session seeks to manage existing tensions that come up in sports teams, to reduce the uncertainty of the members, and to understand the different teammates' opinions about the team. It creates interaction between teammates that do not normally interact. This all facilitates cohesion among the team members.

Duration of the dynamic: based on the size of the team, the dynamic may be longer or shorter, since it is crucial that all the members speak and participate. For example, planning this dynamic with a rugby team would be different than with a futsal team.

Dynamic:

- **Development:** To complete this session, there are two distinct phases.

Phase 1

- Ask the players to sit in a circle.
- In the middle of the circle, place a chair on which an object is placed to represent the team. This may be a T-shirt (without a player's number or name), a ball, the mascot, or the team's badge or logo.
- Explain the basic rules of the dynamic to develop it correctly:

  a. Speak freely, honestly, and sincerely.

  b. Make brief statements without giving explanations, as these will be given later.

  c. When a teammate explains and makes their comments, the others should not react to them openly.

  d. Keep an open mind.

- Indicate to the team that each member will make a constructive statement about something they consider negative about their team while they look at the object chosen to represent it (the T-shirt, for example). The statement should not include anything directly related to a person on the team; they may only comment on general things about the team. It is important to leave 30 seconds so the first person to share can think about what to say. Everyone should speak, one after the other, clockwise, until they complete the circle.
- Complete a second round in the same format, but this time, each person will say positive things about the team.
- After listening to all the statements, each athlete may ask about or comment on only one of the statements made by a teammate, whether positive or negative.

Phase 2

- This phase follows the same dynamic as the previous one, but now the players will sit in the middle chair to listen to positive and negative comments from the rest of their teammates.
- The person who is seated in the chair in the middle of the circle may choose if they prefer to hear the positive or negative statements first.
- Those making comments must do so while maintaining eye contact with the player seated in the middle. They may pass (only once) if they are not ready to make their comment.
- The teammate sitting to the right of the person who spoke first in the previous round will begin. Again, leave 30 seconds before beginning to allow him or her to think about what to say.
- After all the players have been in the middle seat, each one may ask a question to any of their teammates about their positive or negative comment.
- At the end of the dynamic, you may respond to a question or concern if the climate of the session permits.

One point must be clarified: the people who are in the middle and receive comments about themselves generally tend to ask questions about the negative aspects identified. The psychologist who runs the session should ensure that the discussions are brief.

- **Closing:** Ask the team members to explain what happened during the session and how they felt as it progressed.

Conclusion

In this unit, we have understood the notion of cohesion, the types that exist, and how we can work on cohesion with our teams based on what we want to achieve and on the needs of the team at all times.

We have spoken about the importance of task cohesion as well as social cohesion; both must be present in the team.

We have recommended performing cohesion exercises throughout the season that, whenever possible, should be provided in the scheduling of the team's sporting activities and indicate what actions will be performed.

Lastly, we have looked at different examples of dynamics that can be used in the context of team sports, which can be modified to meet the needs and characteristics of the team in question.

CONTINUE

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