YOUTH SPORTS
GROWTH, MATURATION AND TALENT

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2.ª EDIÇÃO
CHAPTER 10: PROMOTING QUALITY IN YOUTH SPORTS

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, debate among experts and coaches has focused on the quality of youth sport programs. Underlying motivations are the special training needs of children and youth, and the continuous search for better results in sport.

There is no quality in youth sport programs without well-prepared, qualified coaches. The preparation of coaches requires an appropriate theoretical framework based upon knowledge produced by scientific and empirical research. However, much of the research dealing with the practices of coaches has not always been satisfactory and errors have been made based on research.

Several key aspects of the debate on quality in youth sport programs are subsequently considered. In youth sport, quality demands that coaches are prepared to think and understand sport far beyond the immediate results of competition. A coach’s commitment to youth sport should be understood within the framework of pedagogical and moral (ethical) responsibility preparing youth for the future.

Parents, communities and society at large expect coaches to be competent and responsible in offering opportunities for youth to practice sport and to develop abilities and qualities under safe conditions within a sound social environment regarding moral and ethical principles. On the other hand, it is not acceptable for coaches, parents and/or staff to use youth activities as an instrument to achieve their own expectations, interests and objectives to the detriment of the developmental needs of youth.

Coaches should be required to improve their practices in the leadership of youth sport programs. They should not only be expected to accomplish specific sport tasks, but should be expected to be responsible and competent to prepare youth for future life. This requires that coaches are familiar with the biological, psychological and social characteristics of growth and development.