

Elite Athlete Training in The United States of America

Ramiz ARABACI

Received Date: 21.03.2019

Accepted Date: 19.05.2019

Abstract

Objectives: The training of elite athletes is a very long and complicated process. The aim of the present study is to examine the training system of elite athletes in the U.S.

Methods: Three different paths were followed to collect the information. First, the web sites of organizations such as U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC), National Council of Youth Sports, National Collegiate Athletic Association, NCAA Eligibility Center and Oklahoma State University (OSU) which brings in leading role for sports in their respective fields were accessed and related publications comprehensive database search was conducted in EBSCO HOST Sport Discus, PubMed and Medline. Second, the sports facilities, fields and tools at Oklahoma State University and Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center (CSOTC) were examined. Finally, coaches of the OSU Athletic teams were interviewed.

Results: The American college system differs from other countries because college sports in the U.S. are a big business sector; coaches usually have a scholarship budget of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. Scholarships for athletes may range from a minimum of contributions to full scholarship covering tuition fees, housing, meals, and books. USOC maintains and operates three national Olympic Training Centers. The USOC has established 17 Olympic Training Sites in 15 states across the United States. Millions of dollars have been invested in these complexes to ensure that athletes receive the best training in the U.S.

Conclusions: In the U.S., there is a systematic structure related to sports, which includes the whole education process from elementary school to the end of a college education. Education and sports are parallel. Schools are the hub of mass sports and elite athletic training. Universities offer the most ideal opportunities for athletes. Universities target and achieve not only the athletic development of the student-athlete but also the well-rounded development of their education.

Key words: Sports, Education, Athletes, Olympics, Humans

Corresponding Author: Bursa Uludag University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, TURKEY,
ramizar@uludag.edu.tr

Introduction

The training of elite athletes is a very long and complicated process. Many factors are important in the training of elite athletes. The countries that combine these factors can be successful in sports.

Today, physical activity, exercise, and sports are important not only in terms of health but also in terms of sociological, economic and political development. Sports is used by many

countries as an important promotion and advertising tool (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006; Bailey, 2005; Geidne, Quennerstedt, & Eriksson, 2013; Jaitman &, Scartascini, 2005; Mendes, Sousa, & Barata, 2011). The Olympic Games (OG) are at the top of the sports pyramid. To compete and gain medals in OG is the biggest dream of each athlete (Din et al., 2015; Malina, 2017; Seiler, 2013; Smolianov, Zakus, & Gallo, 2015). In particular, developed countries that want to be a pioneer in the world are competing for the Olympic Games in their own cities. Turkey's largest and historic city Istanbul became a candidate for the 2020 Summer Olympics, but the final vote was passed by Tokyo. After that, we can say that there are many reasons Istanbul was not chosen. There are significant differences between countries in terms of elite sports training programs. The systems are arranged very differently (Norris, 2010; Smolianov et al., 2015). This is natural because each country has its own characteristics. In Turkey, there are not the multilateral development system and strategy for the training of elite athletes, still. Many athletes must stop sports or training during their university education due to the current system. In some countries, for example, the U.S., the United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, and Germany provide significant scholarships and support to student-athletes. In addition, universities in these countries have very developed sports facilities.

The U.S. is the most successful country in the Modern Olympic Games. Especially in the last 6 Olympic Games, the USA ranks first in the medal ranking (International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2018; Smolianov et al., 2015). A similar picture can be seen in the world championships of many sports. In addition, many elite athletes from other countries are training and preparing for competition in the U.S. despite competing on behalf of their country. As stated by sports historians and, recently, Green, Chalip, & Bowers (2013), the U.S. sports system showed a unique development compared to other countries. In the U.S., education and partly military institutions have been central to the development of the sports system. Due to a strong capitalist orientation, the U.S. has achieved a lot of global results thanks to its increasingly professional sports structure and a high-level sports system. Sports teach discipline, leadership, and many important skills for the physical and intellectual development of people (Bell, 1997; Green, Chalip, & Bowers, 2013).

The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and most of its partners are financed by donations. In 1998, the USOC created the Community Olympic Development Program (Smolianov et al., 2015). The elite sports in U.S. universities have a long history of supporting mass participation of sports. By improving academic learning and providing healthy lifestyle habits, school physical education (PE) and sports programs can contribute to the development of productive citizens. Many connections can be created among coaches, student-athletes and

higher education programs. Moreover, high schools have improved the sport as a marketing tool, similar to what U.S. colleges and professional teams do. Thanks to its glittering sports teams, cheerleaders and sports media, it attracts students to sports fields and halls. High school and college sports have a distinguished character that encourages sports participation and lifelong exercise (Smolianov et al., 2015, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2008). In 2011, the USOC and NCAA joined forces to promote Olympic sports in NCAA organizations (Smolianov et al., 2015).

Despite huge investments in sports in Turkey, the number of individuals engaged in regular exercise, athletes and elite athletes participating in the Olympic Games and winning medals is still very inadequate. Except for one or two sports athletes have a very low chance of gaining medals at the Olympic Games. While young athletes are more successful, the number of medals and athletes is rapidly decreasing in the adult categories. In addition, systems and programs for the training of Olympic athletes (elite athletes) have not yet been developed in our country. The athlete is still not sufficiently supported on the way to the Olympic race. If an athlete starts his / her university education, the systems and conditions make it difficult to maintain the sports level. This situation appears at an earlier sports age. In the Turkish education system, having too many exams starting from elementary school to university and lack of support given to sports, results in poorer athletes. Athletes always stand against both himself and his family with the question of “What do I do if I can't be an athlete?” during the training process. Finally, we hope to win a medal at the Olympic Games and World Championships by making foreign athletes Turkish citizens.

How do developed countries solve these problems? Particularly the most successful country in the sport, the U.S. should be examined on how it has been achieved to this success. The aim of the present study is to examine the training system of elite athletes in the U.S. According to the results of the study, it is expected to contribute to the training of elite athletes in Turkey.

Method

The study was conducted at Oklahoma State University (OSU) between August 2018 and March 2019. A qualitative method was used in the study. Three different paths were followed to collect the information.

First, the web sites of organizations such as USOC and Olympic and Paralympic Foundation -Team USA (“Empower Team USA”, 2018; Green et al., 2013; “International

Olympic Committee”, 2018), National Council of Youth Sports (NCYC) (National Council of Youth Sports [NCYS], 2018; “Who’s Who”, 2018;), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), NCAA Eligibility Center (Hosick, 2011; NCAA Division I Manual, 2018; NCAA Division II Manual, 2018; NCAA Division III Manual, 2018; NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report [SSPRR], 2018; “What is the NCAA”, 2018) and Oklahoma State University (Oklahoma State Sport Club [OSSC], 2017; Oklahoma State University Department of Intercollegiate Athletics [OSUDIA], 2017) which brings in leading role for sports in their respective fields were accessed and related publications comprehensive database search was conducted in EBSCO HOST Sport Discus, PubMed, Medline and Web of Science. Second, the sports facilities, fields and tools at Oklahoma State University (OSU) and Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center (CSOTC) were examined. Finally, coaches and other staff of the OSU Athletic teams and the staff at CSOTC were interviewed.

The interview form was prepared for the interviews. Sports scientists and coaches were initially interviewed after giving information about the investigation. Then questions were pre-determined. After the questions in the interview form were determined, pre-application was carried out. The final version of the interview form was prepared after the needed corrections were made. Interview questions were sent to volunteers. Then an appointment was made for the interview and the consent form was signed. Interviews were held at the volunteers' offices, training fields or halls. An interview lasted for 10-20 minutes depending on the answers of the participants. 14 volunteers aged 23-60 participated in the study.

This study was approved by the Oklahoma State University Ethics Committee (09/20/2018, Application No: ED-18-126) and was conducted according to the Helsinki Declaration. All participants gave their written informed consent following full disclosure of the study protocol and procedures. The study was granted (Application No: 1059B191701161, Approval Date: 14/03/2018, Official letter No: 53325897-115.02-39691, Program 2219) by the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK).

Results

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Eligibility Center

In the US, there are about 3000 universities and colleges in different sports levels and costs. The American college system differs from other countries because college sports in the U.S. are a big business sector; coaches usually have a scholarship budget of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. Scholarships for athletes may range from a minimum of contributions to full scholarship covering tuition fees, housing, meals, and books. Scholars are

offering an average level of scholarships to student-athletes. Universities compete in different Divisions and Organizations.

- NCAA

Division I: large private and public universities, average \$ 14500 scholarship/student

Division II: major private and public universities, average \$ 6000 USD scholarship/student

Division III usually small private universities: No scholarship

- NAIA (National Intercollegiate Sports Association): usually small private universities: average \$ 6500 scholarship/student

- NJCAA (National Junior College Sports Association): community universities, 2 years: average 2400 USD scholarship/student

Colleges want to have the best athletics teams, because there is additional income for the institution and also for marketing the university to future students.

The most important years for the athlete to become an elite athlete are 18-23 years old. At these ages, athletes reach their peak in physical, mental and tactical performance. This period is also a period of graduation from high school and continuing college education. Athlete education is very important in the U.S. For this reason, the education system provides the opportunity for student-athletes to maintain their sport and education together under the best conditions. Primarily, NCAA regulates this.

NCAA is a non-profit organization that makes arrangements for the athletes of 1.281 North American institutions and conferences. It also organizes athletic programs of many colleges and universities in the U.S. Each year almost half a million college athletes compete in 24 sports (the most are Olympic sports) in NCAA's 90 championships, with 3 Divisions, creating 19,500 teams. Colleges in Division I and II offer athletes full or partial athletic scholarships. While the Universities in Division III do not offer any sports scholarships, athletes studying here can get financial assistance based on a kind of right or need. Football, which is the most popular sports in colleges as in the whole country, is divided into two sub-categories as I-A and I-AA for Division I. NCAA first provided training and welfare for student-athletes and prevented competition injustice, so that university athletes can succeed in class, field, and life.

The NCAA leadership team includes college presidents, athletics directors, faculty athletics representatives, compliance officers, conference staff, academic support staff, coaches, sports information directors, health and safety personnel. Member representatives

NCAA serve on various commissions. NCAA's 500 employees at its headquarters in Indianapolis manage programs that benefit student-athletes. For the 2017 year, the NCAA reported revenue of \$ 1.1 billion after releasing an annual audited financial statement. This figure shows an increase every year. These funds are spent on training and sports activities of athletes.

In order to participate as a freshman student-athlete, NCAA requires that the student have three criteria: 1. High school graduation, 2. Completing core academic courses at high school and having a certain grade point average (GPA, minimum 3.5), 3. To get the minimum scores of the SAT or ACT (36 points) similar to the Exam of Higher Education Institutions (YKS) exam in Turkey. During college education, student-athletes are committed and aimed at academic achievement, and must provide annual academic standards and grade point averages in education to compete.

The success of college athletes is monitored in three parameters: courses degrees, minimum credit hours per year and progress towards earning a bachelor's degree. Student-athletes can participate as an amateur in collegiate sport (the amateur rules are determined by NCAA for each sport). Participation in sports competitions is possible in case of academic success, physical, mental and social development, and benefits. The basic philosophy of the NCAA is that, "the preparation of the student-athlete for life is not possible without academic success and development". Only 5% of the student-athletes graduates from colleges continue their careers as professional athletes. Therefore, student-athletes need a well-rounded development in college education. Student-athletes voluntarily participated in college sports. This is amateurism and student-athletes are protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises. As long as student-athletes are college students, athletes' license cannot be issued by other sports clubs and organizations (Hosick, 2011; NCAA Division I Manual, 2018; NCAA Division II Manual, 2018; NCAA Division III Manual, 2018; SSPRR, 2018; "What is the NCAA", 2018).

The NCAA Eligibility Center NCAA certifies the academic and amateur references of all prospective students who wish to compete in Division I or II. According to the current statistics, only 2% of high school athletes are given athletics scholarships to compete at the colleges. This small number means that high school student-athletes and their parents must have realistic expectations for athletics scholarship to do sports at the college. Basic philosophy: Sports are not, the most reliable way to success in life, success is in academic success. NCAA Division I and II universities provide more than \$ 2.7 billion in sports scholarships to over 150,000 student-athletes annually (SSPRR, 2018).

On a typical competition day, student-athletes competing in Division I reported spending 4.4-8.6 hours on sports-related activities. Two-thirds of Division I student-athletes state that the time spent on sports in the off-season is more or closer than the on-season. Activities such as competition, training, strength and conditioning, supportive training (e.g. Yoga), watch a video and match analysis are expressed as countable activities. The NCAA rules limit the time a student-athlete spends on a week of countable activities.

Activities such as academic meetings, injury treatment/prevention, and duties related to prospective student-athletes, nutritionist sessions, sports psychologists sessions, fundraising for the team, media activities, community service, and integration meetings are considered to be uncountable activities. Time spent on weekly activities (168 h/week): 38.5 h/week sport, 34 h/week, 17.1 h/week, Socialization / Relaxation, 78.4 h/week, other: e.g. sleep, work, extra education programs ("Guide for the college-bound", 2018)

Oklahoma State University

OSU was founded in 1890 and is currently a large research university with around 25,000 students. Social, sporting, cultural, health and educational activities of student-athletes are organized by OSU Sports Department. OSU Sports Department's mission is as follows: "It is the mission of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics at Oklahoma State University to provide student-athletes with excellent opportunities to compete and win at the highest levels of college sports; to prepare student-athletes for lifelong contributions to society; to embrace equality, educational opportunity and diversity; to operate with fiscal integrity and compliance with NCAA, Big 12 Conference, and university guidelines; and to be a positive influence on the reputation and purposes of Oklahoma State University."

OSU has 52 NCAA national team championships. The US ranks 4th among the top national team championship winners among the universities, and the Sports Department is among the most developed in the country. The OSU is included in the country's top 10 programs with six appearances in the Final Four. The tournament win of all time is the country's top-20. The OSU Sports Department has 34 units and more than 300 active staff. Some of them are Administration, Academic Services, Business Office, Athletic Compliance, Computer and Technical Support, Cowboy Sports Properties, Athletic Development, Athletic Equipment, Facilities / Maintenance, Game Presentations, Marketing and Sales, Communication, Photography, Spirit Groups, Strength and Conditioning, Athletic Ticket Office, Athlete Training, Sports Psychology, Sports Medicine and Orange Power Studio.

Men's Sports: Baseball, Basketball, Track & Fields, Football, Golf, Tennis, Wrestling.

Women's Sports: Basketball, Track & Fields, Equestrian, Golf, Football, Softball, Tennis.

Sports Facilities: Gallagher-Iba Arena (built in 1938, cost \$1.5 million, renewal 2000 year, \$ 56 million 13,611 seating capacity), Sports Department units and offices are located here. Boone Pickens Stadium (built in 1919, renewal 2009 year, seating capacity 60,000), Heritage Hall, Neal Patterson Football Stadium (built in 2018, \$ 20 million, 2500 seating capacity), Karsten Creek Golf Course, Greenwood Tennis Center (built in 2014, 350 seating capacity, 12 open, 6 indoor courts, \$ 6 million), Allie P. Reynolds Baseball Stadium (built in 1982, \$ 2.2 million, the new one will be opened in 2019), the Cowgirl Softball Stadium (2000, 752 seating capacity, \$ 2 million), Sherman Smith Training Center (2013, \$ 19 million, 92000 ft²), Athletic Complex (built in 2013, \$ 9 million), Cross Country Track, Totusek Arena - Equestrian (18,000 ft² ground, 779 seating capacity, 1,675 ft² classrooms). Wrestling Hall (3 mats), Fitness Center, Sports Medicine, and treatment center (OSUDIA, 2017).

Colvin Recreation Complex: The construction was \$ 3.3 million in 1969, 150,000 ft². The renovation of the building in 2004 was \$ 23 million dollars, 240,000 ft². In the complex, there are indoor and outdoor pools, fitness room, small fitness rooms, rhythmic gymnastics, and dance training hall, martial sports hall, 2 squash courts, dressing and showers, sauna, multipurpose hall, 4 indoor jogging tracks, futsal hall, 4 pieces basketball court-sized multipurpose hall, volleyball and badminton hall arranged for the two salons.

Colvin Center Annex: 4 synthetic basketball courts side by side, 80 floodlit tennis courts, beach volleyball court and 2 large grass fields (OSSC, 2017).

Oklahoma State University Coaches Interviews

A total of 14 head coaches, assistant coaches and volunteer coaches from Oklahoma State University were interviewed. It was determined that volunteers had between 1-29 years experience in their duties. In the interviews, it is understood that the coach and especially the head coaches did not change very often. OSU management prefers coaches who are previously connected to the university or city.

How to recruit athletes for teams? Each team has its own athlete recruitment method. Athletes from all over the world and from each state in the United States will be given one year by coaches and/or an assistant coach or staffs in the selection process. Athletes who will graduate from high school begin to be consider from 11th to 12th grade. Athletes from softball, baseball, basketball, and football are usually recruited from traveling teams. Coaches can also watch athletes in tournaments. For teams such as tennis, certain rankings can be used. Coaches can request a match or training videos from athletes. NCAA has selected athletic selection

criteria and date for each sport. According to these dates, athletes and coaches can meet for interviews. Athletes must follow the rules of amateurism to enter colleges. They also cannot compete on behalf of another club if they start a college education. Coaches also take into account not only the athletic success of the athlete but also their academic ability. Student-athletes must also meet success criteria during college education as well as beforehand. The NCAA has about 500 pages of guidelines that are being reviewed annually.

What support does the university provide to student-athletes? Some student-athletes are provided with financial support (scholarships). All athletes are not given the same scholarship in the team. Scholarships can fully or partially cover the costs of tuition, housing, dining, insurance, and books. A number of scholarship vary from team to team and may vary between athletes in the same team. U.S. colleges offer the best facilities for student-athletes. In addition, colleges hire and work with the best coaches. For coaches, it is very prestigious and well paid to train in any university. For example, in many colleges, the football team head coach salary is more than the university presidents. In the same way, it is seen that athletics leading college coaches are paid more than academic staff. Each team has a strength & conditioning assistants, nutritionist, psychologist, and training consultant. Their task is to provide a well-rounded development for athletes. There are also sports medicine departments where physicians treat athletes. University sports are divided into three groups: 1) headcount sports, 2) equivalency sports and 3) emerging sports. Scholarships vary according to these sports categories. Headcount sports provide the maximum number of scholarships. Men headcount sports are football and basketball, women headcount sports are basketball, tennis, volleyball and artistic gymnastics.

How many hours/week do athletes train in college teams? NCAA rule is 20 h/week in season, other times 8 hours/week. School and educational activities limit further practices. Academic success is very important for student-athletes. In fact, the number of days before each final exam, training is not done. The main aim is to prepare students for the best possible exams.

What advantages do athletes have to study in universities in terms of becoming an elite athlete? Providing excellent facilities, training environments, best coaches, equipment and a high competition environment can be said as the biggest advantages. The university provides good nutrition, psychological and educational support for student-athletes. Also, the university provides social and intellectual development of athlete-students in colleges. Co-consensus of the coaches is that if athletes want to sustain and increase the success of their careers, he/she

must continue college education after graduating from high school. Universities of the U.S. have an excellent system for student-athletes.

What disadvantages do athletes have to study in universities in terms of becoming an elite athlete? Trainers generally state that studying at the college does not have any disadvantages for athletes. Because there is a great deal of time for lectures and academic activities, focusing on sports, time and socializing problems can arise. However, student-athletes can also turn these disadvantages into advantages through good time management. Education and training activities are known to improve academic skills and the brain, which positively affects success in sports.

How many scholarships are there for students and athletes? The number of scholarships in the teams is determined by NCAA rules according to sports. Apart from that, athlete scholarships can be full or partial. Scholarships are usually determined annually. Each year is determined by the academic and sporting success of the student-athlete. Number of scholarships by NCAA I Division: Basketball Men (M) = 11.7; Women (W) = 15, Athletics M= 12.6; W= 18, Football M = 85, Equestrian W = 15, Soccer F = 14, Softball W= 12, Baseball M = 11.7, Tennis M = 4.5, F= 8, Wrestling M = 9.9.

Is there anything you would like to have any change in the sport at your university? Coaches want more athletes to study at colleges. Coaches, also want universities to continue supporting not only student-athletes but also post-graduation Olympic athletes. The resources allocated to the athletes need to be increased every year. Coaches want more training and work out of season. As there are the best facilities, coaches and a strong, equitable and opportunity-giving system, coaches do not need anything else at universities.

How do you dictate talent selection and choose athletes from high schools? There are 10,000 high school in the U.S. The coaches, former athletes and athletes are getting information about many athletes throughout the country. They can also watch athletes in competitions and tournaments. Colleges occasionally organize camps for high school athletes. Coaches have the opportunity to watch the incoming athletes. They also watch videos of the athletes. Some teams also have scout teams.

Why is the U.S. the most successful country of all time in the Olympic Games? One of the main reasons for this is that there is a system in the U.S. The most critical period in the athlete's career is 18-23 years old and this is the college study years. Colleges provide full support to elite athletes. For athletic development at this age, young athletes need financial support not only for education but also for living, traveling and participating in tournaments. This can be obtained from colleges. Likewise, there are a large number of participants in many

sports in high schools. There is a school-based sports system rather than a club system. Very good facilities in terms of quantity and quality and sports equipment are available not only in colleges but also in other schools. Mass sports in the U.S. is also very common. This participation is in both recreation and competition sports. Media sports give great support for sporting events. Sportive organizations are transformed into a show that increases the interest of the society. Many children dreams of becoming an athlete at a very early age. Many sporting activities and organizations are free for children. Scholarships are available at all times. The level of nutrition and health of society is very high. In general, the amount of money spent on sports is much higher than in other countries.

The National Youth Sports Council (NCYS)

NCYS includes those in the youth sports industry. The membership of the NCYS, founded in 1979, represents more than 200 organizations serving 60 million registered participants in organized youth sports programs. NCYS is the largest organization in the United States representing the youth sports industry. NCYS is known for advocacy in promoting safe environments and healthy lifestyles for stronger neighborhoods and communities. According to the NCYS report, it is estimated that 60.3 million young people between the ages of 6 and 18 in the US participate in agency sports such as Little League Baseball, American Youth Football Organization, and Boys and Girls Clubs. In addition to clubs, approximately 7.5 million young people (4.4 million boys, 3.1 million girls) participate in high school sports (NCYS, 2018; “Who’s Who”, 2018).

Youth sports programs are well organized. As a result, parental participation increased over the years and their roles attracted serious attention from sports scientists. Studies have shown that the participation of parents has a profound impact not only on the socialization of children but also on their psychological well-being (Jaitman &, Scartascini, 2005; Malina, 2017; Smolianov et al., 2015). Many young sports events in the U.S. use the “athletic triangle” consisting of parents, coaches, and children (Din et al., 2015; Seiler, 2013).

Between 1997 and 2008, a rapid increase in the number of members and participation in sports has been reported. In the U.S., the 16-18 age group for both sexes participated in the most sports. As much as 73% of young people participate in multiple sports branches in different seasons. Children who are starting sports activities at the age of 5-8 years of age participate in the activities of various sports in different seasons. School (44%) and Community facilities (52%) are the most commonly used facilities (NCYS, 2018).

United States Olympic Committee (USOC)

The USOC's mission is to support the US Olympic and Paralympic athletes to achieve a sustainable competitive edge and to inspire all Americans by showing the values of the Olympic Movement. The USOC serves as the National Olympic Committee and the National Paralympic Committee. The USOC supports Olympic and Paralympic athletes in and outside the sports arena through programs such as direct athletes, health insurance, tuition, media and marketing opportunities, career services and performance-based money prizes. In addition, the Olympic Training Center facilities offer performance services to athletes such as sports medicine. These services include strength and conditioning, psychology, physiology, nutritional aid and performance technology.

USOC maintains and operates three national Olympic Training Centers. These centers are Colorado Springs in Colorado, Lake Placid in New York and Chula Vista in California. In addition, the USOC has established 17 Olympic Training Sites in 15 states across the United States. Millions of dollars have been invested in these complexes to ensure that athletes receive the best training in the U.S. Although appealing to elite athletes, these complexes are also open to the public for tours and event services. The USOC is governed by a 16-member board of directors and a professional staff headed by a CEO. The USOC also has three constituent councils to serve as sources of opinion and advice to the board and USOC staff, including the Athletes' Advisory Council (AAC), National Governing Bodies Council (NGBC) and Multi-Sport Organizations Council. The AAC and NGBC have three representatives on the board, while six members of the board are independent ("Empower Team USA", 2018).

Discussion

Countries need to develop effective and quality talent selection and identification programs in order to achieve and maintain international success in sports. The factors affecting success should be determined very well for the training of elite athletes. At least four and/or eight-year Olympic plans must be prepared (Baker, 2003; Bompa, 1997; Baxter-Jones & Helms, 1996). The development of excellent sports skills should begin in sports in the early age and must systematically sustain an average of 10 years. Education and sports should, therefore be planned together and be sustainable. Physical education and sporting activities in schools should be directed towards these gains (Graham, Holt-Hale, & Parker, 1998; Kirk & Gorely, 2000).

Athletes coming to college age should continue their education and sports together. For this purpose, they should have the ideal opportunities for the sports in the colleges and especially the elite athletes to improve themselves. U.S. system is one of the best examples.

Athletes graduated from high school in this country must study at colleges to carry on their sports and training. This requirement arises from the fact that the best opportunities to maintain sports at the elite level are found in colleges. Apart from these, a successful athletic scholarship system was established.

Developed countries have been working on the scientific basis for the training of elite athletes since the 1980s. For example, in Australia, the Talent Selection Program was developed in the late 1980s and implemented in 1994. The program included track & field, swimming, canoeing, rowing, triathlon, water polo, and weightlifting. The goal of this program was the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. In Australia, all children's athletic and physical performance characteristics were determined in schools. As a result of this talent selection and identification program, Australia has achieved significant successes in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. England has developed several talent development programs with the 2012 Olympic Games nomination. These programs specifically had the goal of training elite athletes. These are designed as "World Class Performance Program", "World Class Performance Pathway Class" and "World Class Podium Program". After the 2008 Olympic Games in England "Girls 4Gold", "Pitch2Podium", "Talent transfer", "Sporting Giants", "Talent 2012", "Fighting Chance", "Paralympic Potential" and "Talent 2016 Tall and Talented" programs simultaneously began to be implemented.

Countries such as the USA, Germany, Australia, China, the UK and Russia - the former Soviet Union, and Korea developed programs of talent selection and development according to their own education systems. These countries provide much support for Olympic athletes. There are also many training centers for elite athletes. There are centers and facilities that elite athletes can continue their activities throughout the year for both winter and summer sports (Abbott, 2006; Houlihan & Green, 2009; Vaeyens et al., 2009).

Conclusions

As a result, to train elite athletes is a long and complex process, so it must be one of the priority policies of the country in order to be successful in sports. In the U.S., there is a systematic structure related to sports, which includes the whole education process from elementary school to the end of a college education. Education and sports are parallel. Schools are the hub of mass sports and elite athletic training. Universities offer the most ideal opportunities for athletes. In fact, not only do the native athletes but also many other athletes come from other countries in order to maintain the sporting life in the best conditions in

colleges. This also leads to increased rivalry among universities. Universities target and achieve not only the athletic development of the student-athlete but also the well-rounded development of their education.

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