Coaches’ stance towards tactical preparation within youth basketball teams

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Introduction
Recently many have claimed for a tactical turn in the teaching of sport games in school settings, emphasizing game understanding and tactical decision-making. Should this claim be extended to youth club leagues? This study intends to inquire the importance granted by coaches to the tactical work within the preparation process of youth basketball players.

Methods
Five coaches of male, age 12-14 basketball teams were interviewed and observed through the application of a category observation system focused on content segments of 3 practice sessions by coach. The classification framework for practice situations includes fitness situations, technical drills (without opposition) and game-like situations (with opposition). Subcategories of game-like situations were inspired on Ticó Camí (2002), and include outnumbering (attack or defence), equal situation; active, semi-active or passive defence; and 1:4, 1:2 or full court. Qualitative and quantitative descriptive data analyses were applied in order to compare similarity and differences in individual coaches profiles regarding tactical work.

Results
The aggregated picture of time use on main session segments by coaches displays similar portions for covering technical and game-like situations (each one close to 38% of session time). The time allocated for fitness preparation is around 12% of session time. This aggregated picture however hiders a huge discrepancy among coaches’ use of time: time allocated game and game-like practice ranged from 24.4% and 53.3%, while time allocated for technical drills ranged from 20.7% to 63.8%. Finally, time allocated for fitness preparation ranged from 0% to 32%.

Results suggest some disagreement between espoused game model and enacted practices regarding the preparation process of basketball players.

Discussion/Conclusion
The disparity of coaches allocation of time on coaching youth basketball players suggests the absence of clear guidelines for basketball coaching at these ages, or else the cohabitation of competitive views regarding the preparation process in basketball. Even if some coaches allocated a substantial portion of time to game like practice, any tactical turn is not evident among this group of coaches.

References
Ticó-Camí, J. (2002). Novos horizontes para o treino do basquetebol (pp. 87-110)