

PERFORMANCE HOMEWORK FOR BASKETBALL PLAYERS

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Igor Jukic's presentation focus on the performance homework for basketball players, but from the perspective of the players needs, which is sometimes different from the way of thinking and the perspective of the coaches. Many issues are related to players' private lives, and those who will have control, or more influence on time, what players spend without the coaching staff, will take advantage. Jukic talked on behalf of the Performance Advisory Board of Euroleague Players Associations. They think it is not easy to change their mindset and start to consider first from the players' point of view and start to speak their language. This is very important because sometimes academic language is so far from players' way of understanding basic topics and basic issues they have in everyday life.

One of these issues is **the congested schedule** of professional basketball players. We can calculate how much the players spend with us during one day, and who has more influence on their life, us, or themselves. Regardless of the way of our calculation, it can be said, that they generally spend more time without us than with us.

Training and games give the players stimulus and smart stress. Each of our practices is smart stress, eustress, not distress. Bad sleep behaviour, travel stress, media, sedentary life, electronic devices, overeating, loneliness, addictive behaviour, and a lot of different sources of **distress** are affecting the players' and also coaches' lives. This stress can be arranged to be smart, but it is a great challenge. Smart stress means over- or super-compensation. This overcompensation is the basis of adaptation to new developments. It is important to remember how to design smart stress. The big problem of modern sports is the **high specificity and the lack of training** not only in top-level basketball but even in juniors'. The competition schedule of the youth athletes, the

huge amount of different games in a short period, require high specificity training and there is no time also for this kind of training. Smart stress will not come from the game, because it's not under control. It is great stress, but stress is stochastic, not deterministic. High specificity and lack of training, became the cancer of modern sport, and it is very dangerous both for health, and performance.

Another big issue is **insufficient personalized care**. It is recommended to spend time to personalize some aspects of training. If we have no appropriate approach to this, the players will be looking for solutions, not in our systemic way, but in their intuitive way. If we are smart enough, we hear them and listen to what they think about their bodies and what they think even about solutions, because they are also teachers. Professionals are hiring strength conditioning coaches, personal coaches, psychologists, nutritionists, and medical doctors. But players who do not have enough money to hire personal staff, and youth athletes depend on you. That is the reason we should care about body, mind, energy and movement. Life performance, well-being, or welfare becoming part of serious and systemic approaches in different parts of the world, in big institutes and organizations, and in sports clubs.

Apart from the three main parts of sports preparation: Competition, Training, and Recovery, the fourth dimension is life performance **and lifestyle**. We can organize before training performance, post-performance, and also extra-performance in a club, but we have a lot of opportunities for organizing homework. Giving one **homework** per day of 15 minutes, 300 days per year, can give you huge potential for improvement. Our Performance Advisory Board, during the last three years, made big efforts to help the players' sometimes surprising requests regarding their private lives.

One of these topics is **recovery**. We have evidence-based scientific results, about the most effective methods, and about what the needs are. But sometimes methods not proven effective are considered to be good by the players. For example, a cold bath is a fantastic tool, but only 50% of the players like it because it is out of their comfort zone. On the contrary, massage is liked by almost all players, but science says, it is doubtful to help physiological recovery. It is very important, to listen and understand subjective feelings from players, because they have, sometimes intuitive way of conclusions, an interactive, holistic way of understanding their bodies and their needs. The most effective tools of recovery: eating every day, drinking every day, sleeping every day, and breathing every day are boring. But we can explain to the players these tools in an interesting way. It can be a placebo, but players can accept this way of communication. If coaches don't speak this kind of language, they will not understand each other, This way of communication is necessary only for coaches, not for the other part of the staff.

Sleep. Sleep is a new science, we read a lot of different checklists, on how to secure a good sleep. One of them is the pillow – sleep quality rising with your pillow- different for the different types of sleepers and occasions. Sleeping separately is also an important issue to be considered.

Social life is crucial for health and performance, but like every single content, it is like a drug. A drug with too many doses is poison. Without social life, it is lonely, and you will be in a bad mood, sometimes in depression, but too many connected behaviours related to social life, like addictive behaviours, can be detrimental to performance. We connected our athletes with musicians and dancers in Croatia, famous people, and even with the help of AI, they were given **music** for different aspects of preparation and warm-up and for recovery.

Psychology and mental health are also significant issues in professional, top-level, and youth sports. By organizing self-monitoring education for players once a year, we can predict different issues related to mental health. Based on research, we realized that **sun exposure** has more benefits than risks if we behave appropriately.

In a well-organized club, players are given some kind of instructions, for general **homework to** do in the offseason. But players who change clubs, have no sufficient care. In that

case, they need us. We encourage them to improve their skill, because skill is the most important factor in basketball. We encourage them to educate themselves tactically, using modern technology and strength and conditioning solutions, when and how to do so, because the schedule is so congested.

We concluded, that especially young players are in **lack of generic and development** training, they play, and practice basketball, but with no significant improvement. **It is not possible to develop players in long term way by playing only basketball - science about long-term athletic development proved!**

One solution for not having time to train is **microdosing**, 15 minutes of homework, and 15 minutes before practice. Small effort but has a big effect. Let's see a neural example: neural is plyometric, but low and mid-level plyometric, can be done at home with smart supervision and smart instructions. Also, there is a short or long high-intensity interval training, with no metabolic, but only respiratory effort.

Injury prevention. We encourage the players to do injury prevention because **availability** is everything. If they are not available, we do not have an effect on them. What is the best injury reduction strategy? Be ready and be prepared. That is why we did this project, called „**personal jacket**” for players.

The next issue is **communication**, the art of life. A lot of people around us and players have different opinions. The first solution to good communication is to teach the staff to control, not to suppress **ego**, and the other one is empathy. **Empathy** may be the most important characteristic of mankind. For more than 100 years old people, living most frequently in Japan, have in common characteristic in their lifestyle, is **Ikigai**. It requires responsibility. Similar is about players to reach **longevity**. A top-level athlete lives four to nine years longer than normal people and is scientifically healthier than normal people even if we talk about locomotor health. So, is the top-level sport healthy? No, but it's healthier than not doing sport. We can take part in promoting these messages, to parents, to the community, and to our players to play and live long and proper.