

4 - TRAINING THE TRAINERS

1. OBJECTIVES

The education of trainers or coaches in chess has made significant strides in the last 5 years, but much remains to be done. The purpose of this “white paper” is to provide a brief overview of training education, to develop a plan for a FIDE Trainer and FIDE Instructor program, and to describe the leadership roles to be provided by the FIDE Trainer Academy.

2. INTRODUCTION

The popularity of chess as a world sport very much depends on its attractiveness and on the recognition of the academic importance of the game. Whether young or old, impressive games of chess hold the promise of adventures of the mind and convey joint experiences independent of the geographical location of the players at the moment the game takes place. In the 21st century, electronic information and communication technology also has a social and intellectual fascination, which allows meaningful activities for millions of people during their spare hours.

At the same time, studying chess offers a chance to impart valuable character-forming qualities in a leisurely way to people interested in the game. It is essential for the development of our sport, that chess be taught in all elementary schools, if possible, and that the game be recognized as an important educational instrument comparable to music, the arts and physical training.

The foundations for such a future development need to be laid today. The next step could then be to establish chess as part of the curricula of colleges of physical education and of Universities, as has already been practised for years in Moscow, Kiev, Sofia and Novi Sad.

“It is widely accepted that trainers hold the key to a better sport experience at all levels of sport. Trainers are teachers of sport – the rules, skills, and tactics. Trainers are achievement motivators – helping athletes to reach for difficult, challenging, and worthwhile goals. Trainers are character developers – they can teach young people right from wrong, to value themselves as worthy individuals, and to become leaders inside and outside of sport. But these are the “ideals” when training; they do not automatically occur.

Training is like a double-edged sword. When that sword is swung in the right direction it is a powerful positive influence on athletes. When swung in the wrong direction, it can be equally destructive. Coach education is about helping trainers to swing that powerful sword the right way. The scientific evidence is clear – trainers are significant role models in the lives of young people who value the sport experience. Trainers can do much good, and they can do much harm. Through training education we increase the likelihood of trainers doing good.

Just what do we mean by the term training education? The term makes reference to the formal education of trainers that involves a planned curriculum that is systematically delivered, comparable to any school or college education program.” COACHING EDUCATION IN AMERICA, 2004

It is in this context, that systematic teaching and training gain particular importance. What matters here is to learn the game of chess quickly and effectively at an age of six to eight years. Everywhere in the world, teaching chess in a school is held in high regard, but only a few countries have actually introduced it as a subject.

And even though the call for integrating chess into school teaching is very old there is but one school in Germany where chess has traditionally been a compulsory subject for all pupils: The school in the 'Schachdorf (chess village) Ströbeck' close to Magdeburg – which today carries the name of 'Dr Emanuel Lasker Elementary School'. Equally important is setting up effective training environments, which help adolescent learners to become strong players using computerized electronic means.

3. WHAT PROCESS LIES AT THE BASE OF THIS?

Today, modern chess training is understood to be a pedagogical process of perfection, guided by scientific findings. During this process, permanent specialised knowledge of chess openings and concrete knowledge of chess endings is gathered in intensive studies and in exercises.

In the creative middle game original thinking with regard to combinatory and strategic capabilities is developed by continuous, consistent and variable repetition. An extensive playing practice of about 100 games played under tournament conditions every year leads to a high level of performance.

Unfortunately, such scientific findings relating to training are not yet realized in all National Federations of FIDE. **With the exception of a few highly gifted individuals the development of performance in chess is totally dependent on the potential of chess teachers and trainers available. As it is, too little funds are allocated to the comprehensive education of chess instructors (with the notable exception of Turkey).**

In chapter 1 of its statutes the World Chess Federation attaches a high priority to raising the level of chess culture and knowledge of sports science, as can be read in section 1.3 '*The purpose and aim of FIDE are therefore the diffusion and development of chess among all nations of the world, as well as the raising of the level of chess culture and knowledge on a sporting, scientific, creative and cultural basis*'.

As past and current practice shows the individual national federations of FIDE have not been able to fulfil this difficult and demanding task. Only the power and support of FIDE can help in fulfilling the wish for more teaching and education. But at the moment we can't be satisfied either with fulfilment of this task by FIDE itself.

Even though the international chess federation has been in existence since 1924, i.e. for 82 years, hardly anyone can give a roughly reliable estimate of how many trainers of the chess sport do in fact exist. Up to now 337 trainers coming from 63 (of 154) countries have been registered, i.e. 41 FIDE Senior Trainers, 154 FIDE Trainers and 142 FIDE Instructors.

The majority of the trainers mentioned did not undergo formal chess teacher training but were awarded their titles on an honorary basis by the FIDE Trainer Committee during the last year for their past achievements as trainers.

It is certain that there are many more unknown trainers in the national member federations. The German Chess Federation alone has more than 1,200 licensed A-, B- and C-Trainers who are not covered by the official FIDE statistics. This number is slated to be raised to 2,008 active trainers by the time the Chess Olympic Games take place in Dresden. Another federation with considerable achievement in this field is Dutch KNSB with its well developed trainers system. The experience of both these federations can be very useful for all other members of FIDE.

4. Coaching BECOMING A PROFESSION

Coaching today is not a profession in the same way law or medicine is. Instead it is an occupation. The criteria to be a profession are that:

- (a) there is a body of specialized knowledge,**
- (b) the knowledge is systematically taught, and**
- (c) there is verification that the knowledge is learned.**

There is a solid body of knowledge available for training chess coaches, but it is not taught systematically to those who become coaches and there is no national verification that this knowledge is learned. This white paper offers recommendations to help shift coaching from existing as an occupation to becoming a profession. For Chess Coaching to become a profession we must abandon the following myths:

- If you played the sport, you can coach the sport.
- The better you played the sport, the more qualified you are to coach the sport.
- If you can teach, you can coach.
- Educated coaches are needed more at the advanced levels of sport than at the introductory levels.

Today coaches most often learn to coach by “training,” just jumping in and doing it. This suggests that the work of coaches is thought to be so benign that they have little potential to do harm. But the public is beginning to recognize the need for more qualified coaches. The parents of children participating in sports are refusing to accept incompetent teaching of sports skills, disorganized practices, psychological abuse of players, improper training techniques, and malpractice in injury treatment.

Sports administrators are also recognizing their obligation to provide qualified coaches for the programs under their jurisdiction. The media is exposing ineptness in training practices at every opportunity it finds. The courts are ruling against coaches who fail to provide the standard of training offered by the most qualified coaches. And, sport administrators, coaches, and athletes all recognize that higher levels of performance and more satisfaction from participating in sports can be achieved through better training.

4.1 OBSTACLES TO OFFERING QUALITY COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The obstacles to moving coaching toward a profession and offering quality training education programs are easy to enumerate. We list them here to recognize what has stood in the way of training education in the past, and to guide us in removing obstacles in the future.

- **Lack of support for training education by leading sport organizations.** This obstacle is experiencing a melt down as more and more organizations not only recognize but also are acting upon the need for training education.
- **Lack of support by those who now coach.** It is not to be unexpected that those who currently coach would resist having new requirements imposed on them to retain their positions. All emerging professions must address how they impose standards on those who already practice the profession.
- **Lack of a requirement for certification.** Coaching will not become a profession until everyone training must meet minimal standards before they are permitted to coach. Just recommending training education is not enough.
- **Pessimism.** Disbelief that education standards can be established and required and that quality training education programs can be delivered economically.
- **Territoriality or “turf protection.”** Some organizations resist having any training education requirements imposed on “their” coaches, feeling that such decisions belong exclusively to that organization. The inevitable lack of cooperation results in fragmented training education programs or even worse no programs at all.
- **Over-emphasis on winning as the benchmark of training success.** If training education emphasizes the development of the athlete, but coaches are evaluated by administrators on their won-loss record, then training education will only be seen as a hurdle to gain entry to coaching, not as a vital part of preparing people to be successful coaches.
- **Lack of a standard curriculum that is accepted by leading sport organizations as the benchmark to qualify to coach.** Every profession has agreement on the basic requirements for becoming a certified professional; coaching must have the same.
- **Lack of knowledge about training practices in certain domains, especially when training elite athletes.** □ **Lack of a strong delivery system for providing training education.** Schools and universities prepare a very small percent of the coaches and the quality of the curricula and instruction varies widely. For example, some curricula are so heavily science based that they have little practical relevance.
- **Compensation.** Except for major school coaches and professional coaches, compensation for coaching in general is very low. It is difficult to demand higher standards for substandard pay.

Source: COACHING EDUCATION IN AMERICA, 2004

5. WHAT TASKS ARE ATTACHED TO THE FIDE TRAINER ACADEMY IN BERLIN?

Since generally there are neither adequate financial resources nor qualified instructors available in the member countries of FIDE, it appears sensible to educate chess trainers at one central location. All countries are given the possibility to delegate their potential teachers so that those passing the exams can use the knowledge acquired to educate teachers and instructors in their respective countries. This is where the centres of excellence proposed by the Right Move will also assist greatly.

For the first time in the history of the sport of chess (and certainly an example for all other sports) a central academy was created for educating instructors specializing in this one sport. The Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany has been generous in offering financial support and the Government of the German capital Berlin, the Senate, provided the academy with suitable premises at competitive rates.

The International FIDE Trainer Academy found its permanent residence on the historic site of the Berlin Olympic Stadium. Chess is in excellent Olympic company here for on 9 July 2006 the final game of the Football World Championship will take place at the stadium as will the Athletics World Championship in 2009.

The world of chess has a central academy for education and continued education where chess teachers can be tutored at a high pedagogic and methodological level in regular courses (see <http://www.fide-trainer-academy.com>). One principal idea consists in the social recognition and social upgrading of the profession of chess trainer, as is the case in other popular sports. The goal is that more young people will be introduced to the game of chess and that the level of performance will be raised across the board.

In the long run the level of chess culture is to be raised in all countries by means of highly qualified trainers. The academy offers different regular courses which result in two different international trainer degrees: FIDE Trainer and FIDE Instructor. Preconditions for obtaining the certificate of FIDE Trainer are a minimum of 5 years training experience and a past or present ELO rating of 2300.

The title of FIDE Instructor can be obtained after two years as a trainer and with an ELO rating of 1800. All licences obtained in the courses are valid for four years. The title of 'FIDE Senior Trainer' is presently an honorary title awarded by the FIDE Trainer Committee for outstanding achievements. It is foreseen to offer courses leading to this highest trainer title in the future, too.

At the International FIDE Trainer Academy four rooms equipped with modern technical means for teaching and communicating are available for the courses around the clock. Each participant in the courses has his/her own work desk in a spacious and quiet training room.

Demonstration boards, flipcharts, a monitor measuring 107 cm, laptops, video camera, video projector and overhead projector allow vivid and practical teaching methods. Participants experience an instructive and inspiring feedback.

A work room equipped with several computers, high-speed broad-band Internet access, e-mail software and webcams facilitates electronic teaching and training using the latest versions of ChessBase software in the process. In addition to this the participants of the courses can surf the Internet at no charge and receive and send their own e-mails. The library room has a collection of recent and older chess publications displayed on long shelves. An office with telephone, fax machine, Internet access, e-mail access and a printer is there to assist participants and lecturers.

Another advantage of the academy's premises is its proximity to the well equipped offices of the German Chess Federation and its youth branch, Deutsche Schachjugend, as well as the secretariat of the European Chess Union (ECU). Altogether these chess institutions use eleven rooms or one complete floor within the building. Close by are two sports hotels which offer inexpensive single rooms for the course participants.

In line with the motto '**Train the Trainer**' the Berlin Trainer Academy imparts the following course contents to the participants, either working in a traditional teacher and class setup or using an integrated teamwork approach based on action-centred methods:

- *Structure, functions and tasks of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) and ECU*
- *Creation of opening's repertoire – basic methods*
- *Understanding middle games – methods of study of chess strategy and practise*
- *Psychological and pedagogical competence of the Chess Trainer (exercises in role playing, psychodrama with multimedia supervision)*
- *Psychology for Trainers - motivation by management of emotions, balancing of emotions for achievement development*
- *Psycho regulative methods, mental training and recreation e.g. by modern biofeedback software*
- *How to study openings.*
- *Main principals of opening strategy – basic methods of teaching*
- *Bases of tactics - methods of teaching of tactical ideas*
- *Typical positions – basic methods of teaching*
- *Main mating constructions – basic methods of teaching*
- *Decision-making, planning, critical moments*
- *Work above improvement by techniques of calculations*
- *Modern education through computer chess*
- *Electronic teaching and learning aids.*

Presently the main lecturers are the world class trainers of the FIDE Trainer Committee GM Yuri Razuvaev from Russia, GM Adrian Mikhalchishin from Ukraine and GM Uwe Boensch, Trainer of the German National Team). In addition to these FIDE Trainers competent specialized scientists, office holders of chess organizations and computer experts regularly lecture in our courses.

One statement from the most recent trainer course in February / March 2006 in Berlin

FIDE Instructor Dominique Wiesmann (Switzerland):

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the FIDE team in Berlin, for making a huge effort to ensure every participant was made to feel welcome and comfortable. It was extremely interesting to see and experience the technique with which professionals teach chess. I really appreciated with the variety of lessons, ranging from opening repertoire to psychological competence. Yuri Razuvaev explained the concept of "resulting position" in a way I had not encountered before.

The implementation of this concept through a neuronal network could probably become one day the future of chess computers and it was the subject I choose for my "teaching expertise lesson", a subject which still captures my attention today. I would finally like to express my appreciation at having the opportunity to share such a valuable experience with enthusiastic, like-minded participants. The networking experience, together with lively discussions and dinners with the organisers was of paramount importance."

6. SUMMARY - OUTLOOK

1. Two more FIDE Trainer's Academies started their successful activities in Singapore and New York. The next step has to be the establishment of other continental academies in Africa, South America and Australia where we have just a few local trainers of high quality.
2. Cooperation of Trainer's and School's committees is needed to establish and develop teaching programmes for chess in school. We can exploit the best programmes developed in some countries.
3. Coordination of Trainer's committee with CACDEC is on the lowest level in years. CACDEC isn't fulfilling its most important function – chess development in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Trainers have to be sent to these areas to hold trainer's seminars and to launch training camps for talented young players.
4. FIDE must establish training centres on all continents. The only FIDE training centre in Slovenia works just for accidental trainings. It had no financial help from FIDE. Academies and FIDE training centres have to form a special educational part of the FIDE Trainers Committee under the supervision of its president.
5. There was very high demand and expectation but FIDE didn't supply this most important development project with even a minimum of funds. It must be a high priority policy in the coming years.
6. There is no successful cooperation of the Trainers Committee with the national federations with the exception of Germany, Singapore, Turkey, Poland and Slovenia. Ties with the established trainers system especially of Russia, France and Spain must be improved.
7. A near future task should be to develop an internet FIDE training system with the help of ChessBase.
8. Development of a trainer's yearbook with methodological and training content. Cooperation with New in Chess should be set as a priority task.
9. Trainer of the Year awards should be established to honour the best coaches of juniors and women. Medals might be named for the world's greatest coaches such as Botvinnik, Boleslavsky or Furman.

Collaborators: Dr Ernst Boensch, German A-licence trainer and Coordinator of the FIDE Trainer Academy Berlin