

FIDE Trainer António Fróis

Travelling in Portuguese Young Chess

In this work, I will try to explain the point of view of one Portuguese chess player and one part of my experience as Portuguese in the middle of chess. I begin my chess carrier in 1976 and I dedicated life professional since 1984.

I went to European Chess under 20 in Groningen 82 us a player, but in 1983 I went to Belfort to The World Junior Championship us the Trainer / second of the Portuguese player Fernando Melão Pereira.

At that time this was my first experience (with 21 years old) as second / Trainer.

We went by train from Lisbon to Paris, Paris to Belfort.

Fernando invite me to go because, I was stronger player, friend, and because I speak Spanish, French and English, and he just speak Portuguese. For me it was great experience. The difference from Groningen when I went alone to play in 1982, it was that I don't need to play and my work was to try to create the conditions to Fernando play the best he knew and, the most important in a complete different atmosphere to him from his normal life.

Very soon I realised that the most important things where not "Technical Chess matters" but the psychological and emotional matters.

We took to France the informators, the encyclopaedias of openings and some books of endings, and all the mornings we prepared the best we knew all the games. But know I can say that was not the most important matter for sure.

The most important matter was: how create the conditions he wants to fight in each day

The food, the absence of the family, the problem of the language, and the recover from defeats it were to him the real great opponents more than the chess players he has to defeat each day.

I will not tell all stories but Fernando wanted to come back home before the finish of the tournament when he loses some though game.

So my work each day was telling “positive thinking“ to make him want to fight and continue the tournament.

It was long tournament with 13 rounds, and he has 5, 5 points out of 11 rounds what was good result to a Portuguese player that it was for first time out of is country.

He loses round number 12, and before lost round I try to fight with him that if he won last game it would be very nice result of 50 %.

He says to me many times I will win, but after one hour he resigns in less than 20 moves and he told me the true: He just wants to come home quickly.

To see our absence of experience we thought Fernando had easy opponent because he was from Turkey. It was Mr. Suat Atalik now GM with about 2600!!

Fifteen days after that World Championship Fernando qualify for first time in his life to the final of Portuguese Championship and he stays in 6th place out of twelve masters in the final what was a surprise to many people in Portugal, but not for me. .

After The tough experience of Belfort he has became much stronger chess player.

I learn many things about this tournament that helped me in the few years. One thing very obvious was try to learning with the mistakes, and understanding what we could make better in new occasions in to different points:

- 1- Before the Tournament.
- 2- During the Tournament.

In Portugal, in that time federation simply send the National Champions of Junior and Cadet to the World Championship with one ticket and alone, and the vice- champion to the European Championship with another ticket and nobody cares about good or bad result, or for example what was the target of the Tournament for our chess.

We just went to the tournaments and it was all. It was our reality by many years.

This makes that each player in Portugal, for example Gm Antunes or our best player in activity, GM Luis Gallego, have been autodidacts all his life. Each of them works alone and with only his own ideas.

The great advantage of to be alone and autodidact like Bobby Fischer is you learn to fight with the adversities alone what make you much more stronger.

The problem is you make many mistakes and you lose many time because we must find all the “good Ways” by yourself.

Till more or less 2002 Portuguese Federation in each year send the players to the International competitions without trainers, with just some delegate to take care of the kids and nothing more.

I went as trainer in a Portuguese delegation to the European Championship of Penniscola 2002 (in Spain);

To World Championship of Halkidiki 2003 (in Greece).

I was chief of Delegation and trainer in The World Championship of Belfort 2005.

I was Chief of Delegation and only Trainer in The Championship of Union of Europe in Mureck 2006.

One my “dreams” as person with 30 years of chess it was, and it is, that the young players in my country can have some help to be better players.

So I and the others trainers in federation spoke, think and wrote, and discuss a lot what was the important matters that we must take care to help the kids in his carriers and once more before and during these international competitions.

How To Lead the Delegation

When I read the book of Mr Mourinho, Portuguese Football Trainer, and now recognized us one of the best football Trainers in the world, I learn very important things.

He invited one very important scientist of the mind, Dr. António Damásio, to make the preface of his book of Football Training.

Dr. Damásio accepted but in the book he tell the true. One he received the invitation his first reaction was: “He his joking with me”

What have my job as scientist to do with a football trainer? “Writes Dr. Damásio in the book of Mourinho.

But after he did some investigation and he accepted with honour and pleasure.

And why these great change?

According to Dr. Damásio, he accepted because he understands that what Mr. José Mourinho does as trainer has great connections with his own work with the human brain. Why?

Because in fact, be trainer of football, director of orchestra, director of one factory, Chief Doctor of one team of Doctors, Leader of a Government, etc, is nowadays the same:

There are persons who are leaders of one team, and must give the conditions that all the members of this team, and one of each members, work for that time in the best possible conditions to achieve the best result. All the members of the team must be happy in his work and totally motivated to the success of the team.

This is the main point of our work with the kids like trainers and leaders in a Chess delegation in a International competition.

Our job is giving all the conditions to the Young players to give his maximum in the games, and have the best possible result.

The Travel to the Tournament –

It is fundamental that the travel of the delegation is very well prepared to prevent difficulty situations. It's necessary arriving with time to make normal accommodation in hotel in the day before the tournament. The idea is everybody is in perfect conditions to the fight when comes the first game.

Problem Of Trust –

In a International Tournament the young players are far away from the fathers, eating different food, sleeping in different bed, so they are not in his natural habitat. So they need to trust totally in the trainers.

Normally the young players are very sensitive especially before the beginning of the competition.

Some time we should go to the hospital with someone, and many time we should do psychological work with the kids .

One Day in Tournament –

It "s absolutely necessary to have good organization in a International delegation.

One off the very important things I discuss with the others trainers was the creation of one " Plan of the day in Tournament ".

When we arrive to the tournament in the day before the beginning of the competition we discuss with the kids how will be each day of work.

For example:

9h00 – 10h00 -- Breakfast

10h00 – 11h00 – Sport or relaxing (in this part each player is free to decided which is better to him play sport, walking, listen music, etc – The idea is all of them appear in the work with “ Angry of chess ”

11h00 - 13h00 --Preparation of the games (about this we will explain more in the next point) .

13h00 – 14h00 -- Lunch hour

14h00 –15h00 -- Resting time

(By our experience many times in this period, young players are very anxious and it “ s necessary talk with them (normally in individual way) about the next game and try to prevent situations in “ the fight that are coming ”. When trainers have some job before with the kids, they know that this is not the time to prepare because; chess is a marathon “ s work. We will not “ safe the world ” in the hour before the game.

But for the more younger (we should remember that now World Championship is a group of tournaments: under 10, under 12, under 14, under 16, and under 18 together in the same event, and the same categories in girls), and for those that are in International competitions for first time, it “ s very hard work trying to calm down before the game.

15h00 – 20h00 actually these is the timetable of the games in the World Championship. For us like trainers we should prepare work when the kids are playing, and waiting they finish the games to analyse with each young player.

20h00 –21h00 - Dinnertime

21h00 - 23h00 - In this time of the day trainers have a lot of work. Depending of the cases we should finish the technical analyse of the games of the day, and analysing the “ psychological situation of the group ”.

This is in my opinion one of the most important works of the trainers in a World young Tournament.

Each boy or girl go to these tournaments with many dreams. As we said before they are out of their natural life. When they lose a game, and notice please that they are young and players without experience, they feel vary badly with themselves.

Many times they just want to come home, and don't want more fight because it "s too hard for is normal experience.

In that moment our paper us trainers is recovering them.

Show to the young players many " positive thinking ". There are many ways to do these but we must know what are the correct words to say.

For example, tell true stories about great players in difficult moments and how they recover of those situations.

It "s very important that the young players learn the best players in the world are human beings like themselves and deal with the defeats it "s one the most important things to a real chess player.

If any player or any sport man is no able to deal with the defeats he or she will quit the sport competition very soon.

Preparation of the games and Number of Persons in a Delegation

In Countries like Portugal we always deal with parallel problems like for example: we ask to federation that it was good to have one trainer to 3 players, and simply federation answer: " sorry we have no many for that ".

This is the reality. In 2002 and 2003 we work in a very good way with one Chief of Delegation and one trainer to 3 players.

The Chief of Delegation must take care of the details of the travel, the accommodation and the food, some eventual problems of health of all the persons of de delegation, and give to the trainers all the conditions to make is technical,

Psychological and pedagogical work with the young players in good conditions, witch should mean not take care about the others problems we talk before.

This it's what I think good conditions to make our work, and of course in our country, in many occasions it was absolutely impossible.

Mentality of The Portuguese Young Players

Once more the ideal situation it " s when the trainer has some work with the young player before the tournament, and during all the year.

This increases the trust in the trainer and the chances of a work with success.

In cases of a young Portuguese player he has all the year 2 " Chess worlds " in is mind.

First " Chess world " : the world of the city and the club where he belongs. Usually

He or she makes almost 100 % of the points in the most part of the tournaments of is age that he plays where he lives.

Second " Chess World " the world of is country where he or she is the champion once more.

By once in a year, these kids play with kids off some age in one tournament that they are not one off the best of the tournament.

For them it "s very new experience. They have very bad habits. For the trainers the first work is preparing the kids (and these takes many hours and very hard psychological work) to this new " Third New World ".

We must show to the kids that they have there owns chances. They are not the " worst players off there tournaments ". They have conditions to believe in themselves.

Make INDIVIDUAL Target

It's very important in sport competition that all the players have one target.

So in the beginning of the competition we should propose that each young Champion off our country define is target in the Tournament.

At the beginning this costs a lot of work to explain but it gives very good Result because each kid learn to think what is trying to do in that tournament and in generally in chess as chess player.

Usually we arrive to the city of the tournament, after the dinner of the day before the tournament, I propose the kids write his target after 5 to 15 minutes of thinking.

After this each trainer can work with each kid and they have a plan of the tournament in function of the target the kid has proposed.

Off course the target could be for example: stay in 10 first of the tournament or play better than the year before. That depends of many conditions.

Preparation of the Games

Once more is very important when the trainer and the kid have a work together before. If this is a fact the work is much more effective, because the trainer knows the weak and the strong points of the kid in all fazes of the game and he should know how to prepare for example the opening to each opponent, and also in what points he should reface the game of his student.

If it's the first time the trainer work with some kid its very difficult to the trainer

Preparing the opening for example. He should even ask what kind of opening or defence you use. In this case, it's impossible to make any changes in the repertoire of the openings because the kid will not trust in him.

In my opinion the ideal situation was the trainer has minimum some months or one year with each kid that he will train in an International Competition, to give both sides time to make a team.

Relation Between Trainers and Young Players

In the past only some individual result like for example Carlos Pereira dos Santos was 5th of the world in 1989,in the World Championship won by Akopian! , Were in some good exception to the results of Portugal in International Competitions to young players.

But since 2002 in Penniscola in The European in Spain we had Ana Baptista, 8th in Girls under14 and the most part of our young players made 50% or more. We should remember that five years before portuguese kids stays many time in the last places of the table, and any 50% result was consider like very good.

Since 2002 in the International Competitions we spoke a lot with our kids, to show that they were much better than they though.

We try to create the possibility that the kids say every thing what was in they're minds in the meetings that you have with them.

WE try to create maximum of interactivity between trainers and young players.

For example, why ask for draw in International tournaments?

Or why accept draw if it was a player from an Eastern Country?

Why 50% is a good result?

We had to do very hard work against many wrong ideas that our kids had in mind.

In 2003, in Greece we had Ruben Pereira 12th of The world and two rounds before the end he was fighting for Bronze medal, in boys under12, and Ana Baptista was 15th of the World in Girls under14, and many of the others fighting over 50%.

Relationship With Parents

For me it's completely clear that in many cases if the parents go to the tournaments, kids have much more problems.

For example, there are kids that don't like that the fathers seeing him playing because it's too much pressure.

There are too much stories where the presence of the fathers create many serious problems to the kids and to the trainers.

In my opinion, federation should have the courage to avoid the presence of the fathers, with the exception of some under10 boy or girl that is very immature and in that cases is good to him or her that one of the fathers will be present by emotional reasons.

Work All Over The Year

Of course chess is not only one World Championship or European Championship by Year.

As I said before work in chess is marathoner's work.

The best kids of the country must play strong competitions all the year.

Of course, school is the most important thing for the fathers, but the federation all the sportive structure of the country should create possible that the kids play for example minimum of one strong tournament each two months or one per month, of course in classical chess not in active chess.

Because active chess is good for the kids, they like very much but they never remember the games in the end, so it's not possible to the trainers work with those games.

The tournaments should be well prepared: what I mean it's the kids should play difficult games.

To make progress it's not good win 10/0 or lose 10/0. Competition should have equal strong.

Of course, the ideal situation was that the kids went out of the country more than once a year to feel not so strange when they go to the World Championship.

In 2005, Portugal had in World Championship in Belfort 3 players in 25 betters of the World in their categories.

In 2006, in Mureck in Austria, we had two silver medals in girls and one bronze medal in boys and in most part of the cases kids work with same trainer in last years and got for example the pleasure of studying endings and nice beautiful problems.

If trainers get that Kids begin to love chess I think we are in right way .

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