

[原著論文]

The Youth Training System for Basketball in the Republic of Serbia: A Comparison with a Junior and Senior High School Basketball Club in Japan

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Abstract

Although The Republic of Serbia (hereinafter, Serbia) has notable success in basketball on the world stage, there are no reports on the development system of basketball clubs, their current situation, or the national development system. This study has been conducted to clarify the details of the Serbian basketball competition, management, and training system for each age group with field surveys of several Serbian clubs and interviews with the Basketball Federation of Serbia and others. These details are compared with a school sports club in Japan.

In Serbia, OKK Beograd and Beovuk 72 were surveyed. A field survey was conducted in two stages from February 6–20, 2015, and February 24–March 1, 2017, to observe and gather information related to official games and team practices in different categories of basketball clubs and the basketball sections of sports clubs in Serbia. Interviews were conducted with the general managers of these clubs, coordinators, coaches, trainers, executives of the federation and others.

Depending on the number of players in the season, if there are enough players, two teams will be formed, a first and a second in U-18 to U-12 team at OKK Beograd. Children under 13 practice a style that blends the team format with school basketball. Beovuk 72 is unique in that it has two senior teams, a first and a second. There is a team called “Young team” in the club. The youth are organized into U-18, U-16, U-14, and U-12 teams in the club. Children aged 6–10 practice in a basketball school style. Practice days per week and number of games in season of each team at the club is clarified. Interviews with executives of the federation reveal category of youth players, competition system, average age of beginning the sport, Practice days per week, practice duration and number of games on average in Serbia.

Japan’s basketball scenario, such as where they play, club structure, age span of a team, tournament system, number of games, can be compared with Serbia’s. It is clarified that player is in a local club, club structure is a pyramid type, age span of a team is one or two years, tournament system is round robin, number of games is almost the same for all teams in Serbia.

Keywords: Development, Competition System, Youth Training Organization, Basketball Federation, Basketball School

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1 Introduction

Despite being a small country with a population of about 7 million, The Republic of Serbia (hereinafter, Serbia) has performed relatively well in international basketball. According to the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) national team ranking, the Serbian men's senior national team ranked 7th in the world in September 2013, 8th in December 2014, 3rd in August 2016, 3rd in October 2016, 3rd in October 2017, 4th in December 2018, 4th in February 2019, and 6th in September 2019. The Serbian women's senior national team ranked 13th in November 2013, 11th in December 2014, 9th in August 2016, 8th in October 2018, and 7th in November 2019.

Focusing on basketball in Serbia and its management system for younger people in Serbia, Cenic (2004) investigated Serbia and Montenegro youth programs for ages 11–18, mainly focusing on training systems, coaching policies, and problems with promising players. Milanović and Radisavljević-Janić (2011) surveyed seventh and eighth grade pupils at elementary schools in Serbia focusing on sports activities outside school. In this study, it became clear that among all sports, basketball has the highest number of players and that the number of boys playing basketball far exceeds that of girls. Radojević et al. (2011) wrote about sports that are popular among students aged 11–15 in Serbia; in this study, basketball is considered as the most popular one.

Giorgijevski (2004) discussed the main events and special rules for mini-basketball in Serbia for children aged 6–10. The report indicates that Serbian mini-basketball for children in this age group is aimed at nurturing the love of the sport and at fostering the spirit of fair play.

However, some researchers' reports focus on the coaching aspect of basketball. Polvona and Ocokoljic (2006) reported that the Serbia and Montenegro Basketball Coaches Association had as its priority the advancement of the education of its members. Coaches were sent for training to the National Basketball Association and National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the Serbia and Montenegro Basketball Coaches Association arranges for coach clinics with world-class coaches. In the present study, the coach license system is also discussed.

Centic (2004) and Polvona and Ocokoljic (2006) are very informative and were conducted when "Serbia and Montenegro" existed. There are no reports on the development system of basketball clubs, their current situation, or the national development system ever since Serbia gained independence in 2006.

This study has been conducted to clarify the details of the Serbian basketball competition, management, and training system for each age group. These details are compared with a school sports club in Japan.

2 Methods

A field survey was conducted in two stages from February 6–20, 2015, and February 24–March 1, 2017, to observe and gather information related to official games and team practices in different categories of basketball clubs and the basketball sections of sports clubs in Serbia. Interviews were conducted with the general managers of these clubs, coordinators, coaches, trainers, and other club staff members. In Serbia, OKK Beograd and Beovuk 72 were surveyed. Interviews were also conducted with the Belgrade Basketball Association President and executives of the Basketball Federation of Serbia. The field survey also observed and gathered information on the activities of the individual clubs in detail and the general trends across the region or country. Various systems of basketball management in Serbia are considered from these two perspectives.

At the same time, documents and video materials related to basketball in Serbia were collected. After the field survey was completed, additional questions, confirmation, and interviews were conducted in Japan. The data obtained from field surveys, interviews, documents, and earlier related research were analyzed. There is a unique name for each age group in Serbia; however, this study uses the notation of U (under). Serbian notation is kept to a minimum, as in full names. Further, some Serbian language notation replaces some Serbian alphabet characters with Roman ones. Affiliation and titles are those of the time the field survey was conducted.

3 Results

(1) OKK Beograd¹⁾

OKK Beograd is a sports club in Belgrade. The basketball teams are one section of the sports club. The senior team of OKK Beograd is often in the Serbia Men's Division 1 League. The

Table 1. Youth training organization structure of OKK Beograd

Category	Team type
U-18	First team
U-16	First team
U-16	Second team
U-15 or U-14	First team
U-15 or U-14	Second team
U-13 or U-12	First team
U-13 or U-12	Second team

structure of the youth training organization of OKK Beograd varies from year to another, but the structure in Table 1 is the base.

In the case of the U-16 team, for instance, depending on the number of players in the season, if there are enough players, two teams will be formed, a first and a second. Both are divided by competition level and enter the official competition as separate teams. The classification of the U-15 and younger teams is determined in accordance with the age distribution of the applicants and the level of competition for each year.

The coach decides the number of training sessions, once or twice a day. In each OKK Beograd team, one head coach usually handles the practice and the game, and there is no assistant coach. Children under 13 practice a style that blends the team format with school basketball.

(2) Beovuk 72²⁾

Beovuk 72 is a basketball club in Belgrade. The senior team, youth training organization teams and basketball school for young children are organized in a pyramid model. Unlike other clubs, Beovuk 72 is unique in that it has two senior teams, a first and a second. These two senior teams are semiprofessional. Furthermore, there is a team called “Young team” in the club. This team consists mainly of U-20 players. This “Young team” is the equivalent of the second team at other clubs. These three teams practice every day.

The youth are organized into U-18, U-16, U-14, and U-12 teams in the club. Perhaps there are multiple teams for the same age group, in which case they are organized by competition level, for instance, a U-14 first team and a U-14 second team. Some players belong to more than one team, in which case, there is a pattern wherein they play for one team throughout the season and for others only during a certain period of the season. Each team in the youth training organization practices 4-6 days a week. Also, there is usually one official match per week. There are about 30 official games in a year, and practice games are set up separately. The youth training organization of Beovuk 72 has a maximum of 16 players per team.

In this club, children aged 6-10 practice in a basketball school style for 3 days a week. There are no official matches for these children, the baskets are lowered, and smaller balls are used. Sometimes, these children may also practice at venues that are smaller than the official courts. From above the structure and practice conditions of this club are shown in Table 2.

The season starts in late July or August, with the official games beginning in September. The season often ends by May depending on the category and other parameters. Therefore, the practice period is extended to 7-10 months, depending on the classification of the teams. Semiprofessional or professional coaches are appointed to the youth training organizations. The coaches of

Table 2. Club structure and practice days of Beovuk 72

Category	Practice days per week	Notes
Senior (first team)	7 days (plus 1 game)	—
Senior (second team)	7 days (plus 1 game)	—
Young team	7 days (plus 1 game)	Equivalent to the second team of other clubs
U-18	5-6 days (plus 1 game)	—
U-16	5-6 days (plus 1 game)	—
U-14	4-5 days (plus 1 game)	—
U-12	4-5 days (plus 1 game)	—
Basketball school (age 6-10)	3 days (plus 1 game)	No official games

the first team in each category are professional, and the coaches of the second team are often semiprofessional. However, the remuneration for such “professional” coaches is not very high.

(3) Interviews with the Belgrade Basketball Association and the Basketball Federation of Serbia overseeing the Serbian player training and competition system

Interviews were conducted with Dejan Dimitrijevic, the President of the Belgrade Basketball Association; with Vladimir Kuzmanovic, the Director of the National Team of the Basketball Federation of Serbia; and with Slobodan Klipa, the former coach of the Serbia U-20 and U-18 men’s national teams. The interviews were held with the purpose of understanding the circumstances pertaining to the overall situation of the region or the country and not to obtain information on individual clubs.

The U-20, U-18, U-16, U-14, and U-13 categories have been established for youth by the Basketball Federation of Serbia. However, the U-20 categories are utilized only when the Federation is convened for the national team, and no matches for these categories are organized in the Serbian League. U-20 players belong to the senior team of each club. These categories are meant only for official competitions; however, each club may have its own, more specific classifications, such as U-15. National competitions are organized for U-18, U-16, and U-14. The U-13 group does not play national tournaments, and their matches are organized only up to the level of local governments, such as those of prefectures. U-12 teams and those under that category play basketball at either basketball school or an equivalent format³⁾. According to the interviewed respondents, children enjoy playing as though they were participating in a festival. Children aged 11 and 12 play with the same basket height and ball size with which adults play. Ages 10 and under play “mini-basketball,” with a lower basket and a smaller ball. For this age group, the height of

the rim is 260 cm and the ball size is 5. In Serbia, children begin playing basketball as early as ages 6–8. It was estimated that on average, children began playing basketball at approximately 11 years old.

In terms of the number of practice sessions per week, practice duration, and number of games, the U-18 and U-16 teams typically undertake 8–9 practice sessions and play one game per week. Similarly, the U-14 teams attend six practice sessions and play one game per week, and the U-13 teams must undergo three practice sessions and one game per week on average. U-12 and U-11 get a practice session and a match three times a week. Official competitions are not arranged for children U-10 and under. A practice session generally lasts 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes for all age-groups, including the U-18 club teams and basketball schools. The number of games organized per season ranges between 22 and 30, depending on the age and other parameters.

4 Discussion

This discussion focuses primarily on activities involving leagues for U-13 and above in order to highlight the characteristics of Serbian basketball because they encompass more full-fledged activities than do basketball schools for younger players. In Serbia, youth basketball is mainly played in local clubs and not in schools. In official competitions two age-groups form a team. Some clubs form teams for single age-groups. Therefore, the same club often includes teams of different ages, and at such instances, the structure of the club resembles a pyramid model. The primary official tournament is based on round robin competitions in leagues that are organized by region.

Japan's basketball scenario can be compared with Serbia's, and the same stipulations of U-13 and above are considered in Japanese basketball as well. Junior and senior high school students are treated in an equivalent manner in Japan. They usually belong to school teams and not to local clubs. Unlike Serbia, school clubs cannot exhibit the pyramid model as they do not cater to teams of different age categories, with each team being independent. In Japan, junior and high schools represent 3-year systems; thus, the official game entry is basically one team unit for all three grades. Competitive groups such as the junior varsity in the United States are not established in Japan. Official competitions in Japan are often conducted on the basis of the knockout system⁴⁾. Thus, strong and weak clubs may differ significantly in the number of official games they play in a year.

Table 3. Comparison between Serbia and Japan in the U-13 and over basketball system

System	Serbia	Japan
Where they play	Local club	School team
Club structure	Pyramid type	Independent
Age span of a team	One or two years	Three years
Tournament system	Round robin	Knockout
Number of games	Almost the same for all teams	Vary by team

5 Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate and analyze the actual state of affairs pertaining to Serbian basketball and to examine the sport's competition, management, and development systems. The results obtained from the analysis elucidate the operations and management of the youth training organizations and basketball schools in Serbia. Therefore, the study's stated purpose has been achieved. It would be useful if further studies were conducted on other former Yugoslav countries. In addition, studies could also be undertaken on the European basketball scenario.

This survey of Serbian basketball provides empirical data that are expected to benefit sports scientists, coaches, people commanding top leagues, those responsible for nurturing basketball players in their formative years, and people charged with building competition and management systems.

Notes

- 1) The data in this section without any notation are all compiled and analyzed by the results of interviews with multiple coaches of OKK Beograd.
- 2) The data in this section without any notation are the results of an interview with Nikola Stanic, the coordinator of the young category at Beovuk 72, organized and analyzed by the author.
- 3) Some clubs operate in the style of a team despite being essentially a basketball school, while some clubs operate such that the lines between the team and the school styles are blurred at this age group.
- 4) The Japan Basketball Association (2017) and the Japan Basketball Association (2019) have stated that it is necessary to foster a "round robin competition culture". That is to say, "round robin competition culture" has not been fostered yet, and it proves that basketball among junior and senior high school players in Japan is dominated by the knockout system.

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セルビア共和国のバスケットボールのユース育成システム ——日本の中学・高校の運動部活動との比較——

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要 約

セルビア共和国（以下、セルビア）はバスケットボール強豪国にも関わらず、育成方法や競技・運営システムに関する研究は多くは無い。そこで本研究はセルビアの複数クラブの現地調査とセルビアバスケットボール連盟等のインタビューを行い、セルビアのバスケットボールに関する各年代の競技・運営システム、育成システムの詳細を明らかにすることを目的とする。そしてそれらを日本の運動部活動と比較し検討するものである。

調査対象はOKKベオグラード、ベオブック72、ベオグラードバスケットボール協会、セルビアバスケットボール連盟である。2015年2月6日から同年2月20日までと2017年2月24日から同年3月1日まで現地調査・視察を行った。そこで各カテゴリーの公式戦、練習を視察しGM他スタッフ、連盟幹部にインタビューを行った。

OKKベオグラードの育成組織はU-18からU-12まで年にもよるがファーストチームとセカンドチームが設定される。13歳以下はチームとバスケットボールスクールの中間のような形態である。ベオブック72はシニアチームが二つあるという独特の形式の他にヤングチームと呼ばれるチーム、そしてU-18からU-12までのチームを持つ。6-10歳はバスケットボールスクールの形式である。各チームの週当たりの練習回数・試合数等も明らかになった。また連盟等へのインタビューにより、育成年代のカテゴリーや、試合の仕組み、競技開始年齢、練習日数、練習時間、試合数等に関して、セルビア国内の一般的な状況が明らかになった。

どのようなクラブに所属しているのか、クラブの構造、チームに含まれる年齢層、公式戦の形式、年間試合数に関して日本の運動部活動と比較した。その結果、セルビアの育成年代の選手は地域のクラブに所属し、そのクラブはピラミッド型の構造をしていることが多く、1または2歳刻みでチームを作り、総当たりで試合を行い、各チームの年間試合数が似通っている、という特徴が浮き彫りになった。

キーワード：育成、競技システム、育成組織、バスケットボール連盟、バスケットボール・スクール