Stručni rad

ULOGA FUDBALSKIH SKAUTA U PROCESU TRANSFORMACIJE IGRAČA: OD TALENTA DO VRHUNSKOG SPORTISTE

*UDK 005.332:796.332.075
796.332:159.928.23*

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Apstrakt: Prihodi koje ostvaruju fudbalski klubovi pripadnici tzv. Lige „velike petorke“ (Engleska, Nemačka, Španija, Italija i Francuska) daju snažan argument tvrdnjama da je savremeni fudbal postao vrlo organizovan, ali i profitabilan biznis. U fudbalskim klubovima pomenutih evropskih zemalja, najpoznatiji igrači današnjice predstavljaju „super heroje“ zbog kojih ljubitelji fudbala, u velikom broju, posećuju fudbalske stadione. Svi igrači, koji se danas identifikuju kao vrhunski sportisti, su na početku svojih sportskih karijera bili samo talentovani pojedinci sa manje ili više izraženim psiho-fizičkim predispozicijama za bavljenje sportom. U ovom radu će biti predstavljene osnovne karakteristike zanimanja profesionalnih skauta kao jednih od ključnih osoba u prepoznavanju talenata i njihovoj transformaciji u vrhunske sportiste. Takođe, u radu se apostrofiraju i neophodne veštine koje ovi sportski stručnjaci treba da poseduju, ali se ukazuje i na značaj odlučivanja prilikom donošenja, često teških i komplikovanih, odluka u procesu identifikacije talenata u sportu.

Ključne reči: *skauting, talenat, predispozicije, fudbal, vrhunski sport.*

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UVOD

Fudbal kao jedan od najpopularnijih i najmasovnijih kolektivnih sportova na svetu je u XXI veku postao veoma unosan biznis. Sa druge strane, fudbal kao igra, kroz istoriju, nije pretrpeo suštinske izmene jer se i dalje može govoriti o „prelepoj igri“ u kojoj uživaju milioni gledalaca na fudbalskim stadionima i preko televizijskih ekrana. Danas, fudbal ima izraženu integrativnu funkciju koja se ogleda u povezivanju različitih nacija, kultura i kontinenata, ali on nije uvek bio tretiran na takav način, a naročito nije bio posmatran kao profitabilna grana.

Prvi oblici igre sa loptom dosežu od pre 3.000 godina i vezuju se za Kinu. Ipak, u današnjem smislu reči, fudbalska igra se najviše vezuje za sredinu XIX veka u Engleskoj, kada su na Univerzitetu Kembridž 1848. godine definisana prva pravila fudbalske igre, nakon čega je usledio razvoj fudbala kao pokreta kroz formiranje prvih fudbalskih klubova i saveza. Prvi fudbalski klub na svetu je FK Šefild Junajted, osnovan 1855. godine u Engleskoj, dok je najstariji fudbalski savez na svetu takođe osnovan u Engleskoj 1863. godine (Macdonald, 2010, 10-11).

Industrijska revolucija, razvoj i ekspanzija gradova širom sveta je uticao da se popularnost fudbalske igre širi. Početkom XX veka, fudbal dobija novu društvenu dimenziju i postaje igra koju dominantno upražnjava radnička klasa (Macdonald, 2010, 12). Prvi elementi fudbala kao lukrativne aktivnosti se pojavljuju tokom sezone 1904/1905, kada je engleski fudbalski klub Njukasl Junajted ostvario promet od 25.000 funti po osnovu prodaje karata (Macdonald, 2010, 102). Naravno, taj iznos u današnjem svetu fudbala izgleda više nego minoran, jer je fudbal u XXI veku nadmašio mnoge privredne grane po prometu finansijskih sredstava i profitabilnosti.

FUDBAL KAO RASTUĆI BIZNIS XXI VEKA

Svetski trendovi, brz razvoj nauke o sportu (tehnologija sportskog treninga, IT u sportu) i sportske industrije usloveli su pravac razvoja sporta u budućnosti (Savić, et al., 2017). Savremeni fudbal je, kao i drugi sportovi, poslednjih decenija doživeo izvesne promene. Promene u načinu i pristupu igre, veći zahtevi od sportista (fudbalera) na planu psihofizičkih sposobnosti, složenost i zahtevnost procesa selekcije, a posebno identifikacije mladih sportista kroz anticipiranje razvoja specifičnih fudbalskih predispozicija, primena modernih i složenih dijagnostičkih metoda u proceni morfološko-funkcionalnih, motoričkih i psiholoških sposobnosti (Trunić, & Mladenović, 2014), potreba da sa najmlađim uzrasnim kategorijama rade obrazovani sportski stručnjaci, samo su neki od važnih faktora koji su usloveli promene u fudbalu

kao sportskoj grani. Takođe, potrebno je istaći da poseban značaj na mnoge aspekte fudbalske igre ima maksimalna profesionalizacija fudbala od najmlađih uzrasnih kategorija koju prate i značajna finansijska sredstva i ulaganja.

Fudbal je ne samo postao unosan biznis, već se način analize i merenja performansi u fudbalu značajno promenio. Uzimaju se u obzir finansijski i nefinansijski parametri kako bi se uporedile performanse klubova koje obuhvataju: prosečnu posećenost na stadionima, bazu navijača širom sveta, medijsku pokrivenost i uspeh na samom terenu u smislu ostvarenog sportskog rezultata. Kombinujući različite parametre, Deloitte Sports Business Group objavljuje svake godine pregled 20 najboljih evropskih klubova prema: sposobnosti generisanja prihoda na dan utakmice (uključujući prodaju pojedinačnih i grupnih karata), prodaji televizijskih prava (uključujući distribuciju prava od učešća u domaćim prvenstvenim i kup takmičenjima i evropskim klupskim takmičenjima) i ostalim komercijalnim izvorima sredstava (sponzorstva, prodaja dresova i suvenira u zvaničnim klupskim prodavnicama, obilasci stadiona i druge komercijalne aktivnosti).

U izveštaju Deloitte Sports Business Group za sezonu 2017/2018 se navodi da je zvanični prvak Evrope za tu sezonu, španski fudbalski klub Real iz Madrida postao prvi klub čiji je ukupni nivo prihoda nadmašio iznos od 700 miliona EUR, ostvarivši izvanrednih 750,9 miliona EUR prihoda. Na drugom mestu je španska Barselona sa prihodom od 690,4 mln EUR, a razlika od 60,5 miliona EUR između dve vodeće ekipe na ovoj listi predstavlja drugu najveću razliku ikada između prvoplasiranih ekipa posmatrano prema kriterijumu ukupnih prihoda.

Zajednička karakteristika liste 20 najboljih evropskih klubova je da svi klubovi pripadaju grupi tzv. Ligi „velike petorke“, odnosno, pet najboljih evropskih prvenstvenih takmičenja koje predstavljaju: engleska „Premijer Liga“, nemačka „Bundesliga“, španska „Primera“, italijanska „Serija A“ i francuska „Liga 1“. Listu 20 najboljih evropskih fudbalskih klubova prema generisanim prihodima u sezoni 2017/2018 čini: devet klubova iz Engleske, četiri kluba iz Italije, po tri kluba iz Španije i Nemačke i jedan klub iz Francuske. Kada se posmatra kumulativni iznos prihoda najboljih 20 evropskih klubova, ostvaren je rekordan prihod od 8,3 milijardi EUR, što predstavlja rast od 400 miliona EUR u odnosu na listu iz sezone 2016/2017. Struktura ostvarenih 8,3 milijardi EUR je bila sledeća: 17% prihoda po osnovu prodaje karata na dan utakmice, 43% po osnovu prodaje televizijskih prava i 40% po osnovu komercijalnih izvora (Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2019). Ako se posmatranje suzi na deset najboljih evropskih klubova u sezoni 2017/2018, proizilazi da su navedeni klubovi ostvarili ukupan prihod od 5,7 milijardi EUR, odnosno, da u performansama najboljih 20 klubova učestvuju sa 68,7%. Pregled najboljih deset evropskih klubova prema ukupnim prihodima u sezoni 2017/2018 je prikazan u Tabeli 1.

Tabela 1. Prvih 10 klubova prema ukupnim prihodima
 Izvor: Autori na osnovu Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2019

R.br.	Naziv fudbalskog kluba	Ukupni prihodi (mln EUR)
1	Real Madrid	750,9
2	Barselona	690,4
3	Mančester Junajted	666,0
4	Bajern Minhen	629,2
5	Mančester Siti	568,4
6	Pariz Sen Žermen	541,7
7	Liverpul	513,7
8	Čelzi	505,7
9	Arsenal	439,2
10	Tottenham	428,3
Ukupno prvih 10 klubova:		5.733,5
<i>Ukupno prvih 20 klubova:</i>		<i>8.344,6</i>

Struktura ostvarenih ukupnih prihoda prvih deset evropskih klubova je prikazana na Slici 1.

Slika 1. Struktura ukupnih prihoda prvih 10 klubova
 u sezoni 2017/2018 (u mln EUR)
 Izvor: Autori na osnovu Deloitte Sports Business Group (2019)

Ostvareni finansijski rezultati fudbalskih klubova predstavljaju samo vrh „ledenog brega“ i odraz su poslovanja fudbalskih klubova u uslovima prilagođenim izazovima

Ostvareni finansijski rezultati fudbalskih klubova predstavljaju samo vrh „ledenog brega“, odnosno, odraz su poslovanja fudbalskih klubova u uslovima prilagođenim izazovima modernog doba. Suštinski, iza navedenih impresivnih finansijskih rezultata u pogledu prihoda, i dalje stoje neposredni „proizvođači“, tj. igrači na terenu. Već duži vremenski period nikakvu novost ne predstavljaju vesti o enormno visokim iznosima transfera igrača. Tako su u epicentru javnosti bile vesti o transferu Brazilca Neimara iz Barselone u Pariz Sen Žermen za 222 miliona EUR (BBC Sport, 2017); Francuza Pola Pogbe iz Juventusa u Mančester Junajted za 105 miliona EUR (Transfermarkt, 2019) i mnogi drugi. Pre nego što su ovi fudbaleri stekli planetarnu popularnost i oni su bili samo talentovani igrači, igrači za koje se nije moglo sa apsolutnom sigurnošću proceniti da će zaista i ostvariti vrhunske karijere.

U ovom radu, centralno mesto je posvećeno funkciji skauting službe u fudbalskim klubovima, odnosno, uticaju „ljudi iz senke“ koji su zaduženi da prepoznaju i anticipiraju talenat igrača predisponiranih za bavljenje vrhunskim sportom. Akcenat je na znanju, veštinama i karakteristikama skauta, kao neizostavnog člana tima u modernom fudbalu, i usled čijih sposobnosti se, u velikoj meri, kreira i krajnji rezultat (uspeh) svakog fudbalskog kluba.

ZANIMANJE SKAUTA TALENATA U FUDBALU

Identifikacija i selekcija talenata u sportu predstavlja složen i dinamičan proces koji je poslednjih decenija postao jedna od centralnih tema nauke o sportu (Den Hartigh, Niessen, Frencken, & Meijer, 2018; Gonçalves, Rama, & Figueiredo, 2012). U prilog tome je činjenica da je potreban multidimenzionalan pristup u definisanju pojma *talenat u sportu*. Tako većina autora definiše talentovanost u sportu kao kombinaciju genetski stečenih morfoloških karakteristika, psiho - motoričkih, funkcionalnih, kognitivnih i socijalnih sposobnosti, i stepen intrinzične motivacije i kreativnosti pojedinca (Čoh, 2019, Malina, 2010).

U većini zemalja, u periodu rane specijalizacije u sportu i posmatranja mladih talenata, ključnu ulogu u pronalaženju potencijalnih vrhunskih sportista (fudbalera) za vreme trenažnog procesa i utakmica imaju sportski eksperti, pre svega treneri i skauti. Sposobnost prepoznavanja talenata u sportu obezbeđuje klubovima i nacionalnim timovima kvalitet i prestiž u ulaganje u „prave“ igrače što predstavlja efikasno upravljanje ljudskim i materijalnim resursima, i vremenom. Međutim, problemi najčešće nastaju kada ne postoji sveobuhvatan nacionalni sportski i obrazovni sistem u kojem se na sistemski i strateški način sprovodi identifikacija mladih talenata, kao i kada ne postoje objektivni pokazatelji selekcije u sportu bazirani na naučnoj osnovi.

Na osnovu materijalnih mogućnosti, stručnih znanja, kompetencija, percepcije i intuitivne procene skauta vrši se procenjivanje sposobnosti i performansi sportista (fudbalera). Skautiranje talenata podrazumeva proces praćenja i ocene talentovanih fudbalera, koji u konačnoj fazi može rezultirati potpisivanjem ugovora igrača sa klubom za koji skaut radi. U tom smislu su pojedini skauti prvenstveno fokusirani na praćenje mladih igrača koji su nagovestili svoj talenat i u kojima prepoznaju buduće fudbalske „zvezde“. Manji fudbalski klubovi su uglavnom skoncentrisani na skautiranje u okviru svog regiona ili zemlje, dok veći i bogatiji fudbalski klubovi poseduju rasprostranjenu skauting mrežu širom sveta. Između menadžera i trenera u fudbalskim klubovima, sa jedne strane, i skauta, sa druge strane, treba da postoji visok stepen uzajamnog poverenja, jer se na osnovu detaljnih izveštaja skauta mogu doneti vrlo složene i bitne odluke o kupovini igrača. Svakako da treba razlikovati skauting koji se odnosi na mlade igrače različitih uzrasta i igrače koji već igraju u klubovima na različitim takmičarskim nivoima. U ovom radu će najviše biti reči o skautingu fudbalera mlađih uzrasnih kategorija.

Kao što je već u radu napomenuto, kako u većini sportova tako i u fudbalu talenat je određen antropometrijskim, fiziološko-motoričkim, psihološkim i socijalnim prediktorima (Baker, Copley, & Schorer, 2012). S druge strane, identifikacija talenta i njihov dalji razvoj (Mills et al., 2012) predstavljaju ključne tačke u potencijalnom kreiranju budućih vrhunskih sportista. Većina autora ističe da put ka vrhunskom sportskom rezultatu obuhvata pet ključnih faza i to (Vaeyens, et al. 2008; Williams, & Reilly, 2000):

- 1) fazu otkrivanja talenta (engl. *detection*) - odnosi se na otkrivanje onih talenata za koje je procenjeno da poseduju odgovarajuće predispozicije, a da nisu aktivno uključeni u sportska takmičenja;
- 2) fazu identifikovanja talenta (engl. *identification*) - podrazumeva proces prepoznavanja potencijalnih vrhunskih sportista, kao i predviđanje dostignuća na osnovu multidisciplinarnog pristupa procene njihovih fizičkih, fizioloških, psiholoških, genetskih, socioloških i tehničkih potencijala i karakteristika;
- 3) fazu razvoja talenta (engl. *development*) - podrazumeva obezbeđivanje uslova za učenje svakog pojedinca i pružanje mogućnosti za razvoj potencijala u skladu sa fizičkim, mentalnim, socijalnim i emocionalnim karakteristikama pojedinca;
- 4) fazu potvrđivanja (engl. *confirmation*) - obuhvata procese praćenja, proveravanja i potvrde brzine stepena razvoja predispozicija sportista koje su potrebne za uspeh u sportu; i
- 5) fazu selekcije (engl. *selection*) - podrazumeva odabir najboljih, odnosno identifikovanje onih pojedinaca ili grupa igrača koji će moći da obave postavljene zadatke u određenom sportskom kontekstu.

Pet ključnih faza u identifikaciji i razvoju talenata u sportu prikazano je na Slici 2.

Slika 2: Faza identifikacije i razvoja talenata u sportu

Strpljivost i studioznost predstavljaju bitne odlike uspešnog fudbalskog skauta. Skauti pokazuju strpljenje i istrajnost u praćenju fudbalskih mečeva, ali i ponašanja talentovanih fudbalera, pre nego što donesu odgovarajuću odluku o angažovanju određenog igrača. Prvi nivo evaluacije najčešće podrazumeva sagledavanje da li posmatrani igrač poseduje potrebne tehničke i druge karakteristike za uspeh u sportu, a potom se, u zavisnosti od tih karakteristika, analiziraju mogućnosti pojedinca u odnosu na zahteve određenih pozicija u timu. Na taj način se procenjuju i anticipiraju predispozicije koje fudbaler treba da poseduje za određene uloge i zadatke, a koje on može uspešno da izvršava i postiže u timskoj igri. To je već faza selekcije u sportu i davanja mogućnosti sportisti da, u toku praćenja, ispolji sve svoje psihofizičke predispozicije i sposobnosti za određene pozicije u timu.

Igrači u timu imaju značajno različite uloge i shodno tome treba praviti jasnu razliku između poželjnih karakteristika igrača na određenim pozicijama (Musculus & Lobinger, 2018):

- *Golman*: bitan je dobar refleks; komunikacija sa linijom uže odbrane; sposobnosti u duelu „jedan na jedan“; osećaj za prostor; sposobnost organizacije i raspoređivanja igrača u odbrambenim zadacima;
- *Centralni odbrambeni igrač*: bitna je dobra igra u skoku i sposobnost oduzimanja lopte; visina, hrabrost i beskompromisnost u duel igri; koncentracija; pregled igre; osećaj za prostor;

- *Spoljni igrač na bekovskim pozicijama*: bitna je brzina; izdržljivost; odgovornost u praćenju protivničkih igrača;
- *Centralni vezni igrač*: bitna je snaga; izdržljivost; sposobnost odigravanja preciznih pasova; pozicioniranje; pregled igre; kreativnost; promena ritma igre;
- *Bočni (krilni) igrač*: bitna je brzina; tehničke karakteristike (pre svega dribling i kontrola lopte); kreativnost; i
- *Napadač*: realizatorske sposobnosti; staloženost i mirnoća u završnici; tehničke karakteristike; brzina; brzina reakcije; anticipacija situacije; osećaj za kretanje bez lopte; visoke tehničke sposobnosti udarca.

Nakon što skaut preporuči igrača određenom fudbalskom klubu, klub se može opredeliti da prati napredak tog igrača u narednom periodu. Skauti procenjuju da li igrač pokazuje konzistentnost u formi tokom sezone (odnosno, u kojoj meri je podložan oscilacijama), potom ocenjuje sklonost ka timskom radu, odnosno, odgovornost i ponašanje igrača u grupi i mnoge druge aspekte. Takođe, postoji mogućnost da se igrač pozove na probu u određeni klub, ukoliko inicijalno zadovoljava opšte zahteve. Na samoj probi, skauti i tim trenera vrše procenu podobnosti i mogućnosti podređivanja ličnosti igrača timu, kao i njegov stav i ponašanje tokom treninga (Giacobbi et al., 2012). Tokom probe, moguće je ustanoviti dobre i loše strane svakog igrača u odnosu na postojeći tim i doneti ocenu o koristima nakon njegovog potencijalnog uključivanja u grupu. Veoma je važno napomenuti da pojedini klubovi ne dozvoljavaju svojim igračima pod ugovorom da odlaze na probe u druge klubove, usled mogućih povreda i prisutne neizvesnosti oko dalje realizacije transfera. Nakon što se završe probni nastupi igrača i prikupe sve neophodne procene, klub koji je zadovoljan uočenim otpočinje pregovore o njegovom daljem angažovanju.

Odluka kluba o angažovanju talentovanog igrača je rezultat sveobuhvatnog procesa u kojem su sagledani svi aspekti na bazi interakcije svih zainteresovanih strana. Uprava fudbalskog kluba posebno uvažava ekspertsko mišljenje svog trenera/menadžera koji konačnu ocenu o angažovanju igrača donosi na osnovu dugogodišnjeg iskustva i rada sa igračima različitih karakteristika (Jones et al., 2010). Svoj sud iskusni treneri mogu zasnivati na reprezentativnom uzorku igrača sa kojima su sarađivali u prošlosti, a koji su pri tome vrlo različite ličnosti, drugačijih sposobnosti i na kraju, nivoa uspešnosti. Zahvaljujući svom radu i iskustvu, treneri mogu vrlo pouzdano da procene i predvide trenutni i budući potencijal igrača. Kada se karakteristike igrača u potpunosti uklape u koncept, filozofiju i sistem preferencija trenera, sledi konačni dogovor sa igračem i njegovim agentima oko uslova ugovora.

KLJUČNA ZADUŽENJA I KARAKTERISTIKE SKAUTA TALENATA

Dobro organizovana i efikasna skauting služba znači istovremeno i veliku finansijsku uštedu za svaki fudbalski klub. Naravno, ukoliko je finansijska moć kluba ograničena, onda je posao skauting službe znatno kompleksniji. Skautiranje predstavlja vrlo izazovan, zahtevan i intenzivan posao. Kod skautiranja talenata vrši se procena nadarenosti mladih igrača na početku njihove karijere i daje se konačna ocena nakon detaljnih analiza i izveštaja o karakteristikama igrača.

U ključne karakteristike uspešnog skauta se ubrajaju: spremnost na fleksibilno radno vreme; spremnost na česta putovanja; spremnost na prekovremeni rad i preuzimanje odgovornosti za donete odluke; odlične komunikacione i organizacione veštine; profesionalnost i visok stepen pouzdanosti; timski igrač; dobra moć zapažanja i zaključivanja; poznavanje rada u savremenim softverima, lako uspostavljanje i održavanje kontakata (Salford City, 2019). Međutim, vrlo je komplikovano pronaći jedinstven odgovor na pitanje: Kako otkriti talentovanog fudbalera?

Nekadašnji skaut engleskih fudbalskih klubova Totenhema, Vest Hema i Portsmuta *Robert Walker* je istakao da je nekada život skauta podrazumevao mnogo radnih sati i putovanja, promenljivih vremenskih uslova, posmatranja nekoliko (čak tri ili četiri) utakmica dnevno (BBC UK, 2019). Nakon toga bi skauti telefonom pozivali klub i na taj način ukazivali im na potencijalne talente, za koje smatraju da zaslužuju šansu. Proces bi bio okončan razgovorom sa roditeljima i ponudom za probu u klubu uz regulisane troškove prevoza. Ipak, poslednja decenija XX veka je u poslu skauta donela značajne novitete, pa tako skautiranje podrazumeva podnošenje različitih izveštaja koji pokrivaju širok dijapazon aspekata vezanih za fudbalsku igru poput: visine, težine, brzine, agilnosti, igračke inteligencije, fizičke i mentalne snage. Prema decenijskom iskustvu Roberta Walkera jasno proizilazi da je talenat neophodan preduslov za uspeh igrača, ali dostizanje vrhunskog sportskog uspeha podrazumeva i radnu etiku, volju i mentalnu snagu za prevazilaženje prepreka i strast (želju) da se igrač vrati na staze uspeha nakon što doživi prvo razočaranje i neuspeh u sportskom segmentu. Ipak, Walker smatra da osnove skautinga ostaju nepromenjene, odnosno, skautiranje nikada neće dostići takav evolutivni nivo da će se moći tretirati kao egzaktna nauka. Naprotiv, on je stava da će skauti morati da se oslanjaju prvenstveno na svoj instinkt. Vrhunski sportski rezultati i takmičenja zahtevaju ličnosti koje će biti otporne na fizička i psihička opterećenja i pritiske. Ključ uspeha talentovanih igrača leži u napornom radu i nadgradnji, istrajnosti, učenju i odricanju.

Pored inteligencije za igru, kao odlučujući faktor se tretira sposobnost koordinacije, jer u teškim situacijama na terenu igrač mora u velikoj meri da

se oslanja na instinkt, a koordinacija pokreta i automatizacija su preduslov za to. Neretko se i sami skauti identifikuju sa igračima čiji su talenat prepoznali, pa zato posebnu vrstu ličnog zadovoljstva za skaute predstavlja momenat u kojem neki njihov igrač ostvari izvanredan sportski uspeh. Ključna zaduženja skauta podrazumevaju sledeće aktivnosti (Salford City, 2019):

- Uključenost u lokalne, regionalne i nacionalne skauting mreže sa ciljem identifikacije novih talenata;
- Kreiranje jasne skauting strategije;
- Svakodnevna saradnja sa menadžerima i trenerima klubova kako bi se identifikovali talenti;
- Razumevanje filozofije i načina funkcionisanja kluba kako bi se proces potrage za talentima realizovao na optimalan način;
- Kreiranje različitih izveštaja sa svim bitnim podacima o talentima;
- Izgradnja i održavanje odnosa sa lokalnim amaterskim i profesionalnim klubovima;
- Definisanje politike praćenja talenata i njihovih rezultata;
- Praćenje najnovijih trendova i tehnika u oblasti skautinga.

Pozitivan primer uspešnog skautinga jeste skauting služba nemačkog fudbalskog kluba Borusije iz Dortmunda. Centralnu figuru u uspostavljenom sistemu predstavlja *Markus Pilava*, četrdesetogodišnjak iz Bohuma, koji je januara 2017. godine postao šef skauting službe Borusije i razvio plan po kojem se angažuju najbolji tinejdžeri iz cele Nemačke i inostranstva. Pilava na raspolaganju ima 20 skauta čiji je cilj da na utakmicama mlađih kategorija uspostave kontakt sa željenim igračem pre konkurenata. Skautiraju se najčešće deca između 12 i 15 godina. Predmet praćenja su i nešto stariji igrači s tim što se za uzrast od 16 do 18 godina skautiranje sprovodi i izvan Nemačke (uglavnom u Holandiji i Belgiji). Granica broja godina je podignuta tako da nije dozvoljeno dovoditi strance ispod 16 godina, a za države van Evropske Unije ispod 18 godina. Iz tog razloga je, na primer, Švajcarska manje atraktivna za skaute Borusije, jer su fudbaleri od 18, 19 ili 20 godina uglavnom izvan finansijskog domašaja nemačkog kluba (Mozzartsport, 2019).

OGRANIČENJA U PROCESU ODLUČIVANJA U SKAUTINGU

Prilikom donošenja odluke o angažovanju nekog igrača postoji više aspekata koji mogu zamagliti percepciju samog skauta. Naime, značajne razlike postoje na koji način se vrši praćenje igrača - direktno na samom fudbalskom terenu ili indirektno na televizijskom ekranu. Takođe, na percepciju mnogih trenera ili menadžera utiče i zemlja porekla određenog igrača. Opšte poznato je da se epiteti magičnih driblera i umetnika sa loptom više vezuju za

igrače iz Južne Amerike (Brazila i Argentine) nego za talentovane igrače koji vode poreklo naprimer iz Skandinavskih zemalja ili iz zemalja Jugoistočne Evrope kao budućim vrhunskim igračima (Bierman, 2009). S jedne strane, postoji opravdanost navedenog mišljenja jer je visok stepen verovatnoće da će prosečan Brazilski fudbaler biti tehnički i taktički nadareniji, a proces učenja i savladavanja trenažnih elemenata kod njih biti znatno brži nego što je slučaj kod igrača iz manje atraktivnih zemalja. Međutim, s druge strane, apsolutno pogrešno je generalizovati ovakve stavove, jer postoje igrači u Brazilu i Argentini koji nemaju visoke tehničke performanse. Istovremeno pojedini izuzetno talentovani igrači iz manje poznatih zemalja, poput Finske (čuveni finski fudbaler Jari Litmanen, koji je izvanrednu karijeru napravio u holandskom Ajaksu, a potom nastupao za špansku Barcelonu i engleski Liverpool) ili Srbije, mogu biti izuzetno tehnički nadareni. Koliko je teško probiti se na svetskoj fudbalskoj sceni ukoliko igrač potiče iz neke neatraktivne zemlje, svedoči i primer bugarskog fudbalera Dimitra Berbatova, koji je uprkos talentu morao zaobilaznim putem preko nemačkog Bajerna iz Leverkusena i engleskog Totenhema, do vrhunca svoje profesionalne karijere u čuvenom engleskom klubu Mančester Junajted (Bierman, 2009).

Pojedine odluke o angažmanu talentovanih igrača se ponekad donose iz kulturoloških razloga. Nije iznenađujuće što se veliki broj igrača iz Skandinavije nalazi u engleskoj „Premijer ligi“, ili što je najčešća destinacija igrača iz Poljske nemačka „Bundes liga“. Ekonomski uslovi u fudbalskim klubovima u velikoj meri diktiraju mogućnost transfera igrača iz zemalja koje su prepoznate kao izvor talentovanih mladih igrača. Veoma logično je da će bogatiji fudbalski klubovi biti fokusirani na igrače iz Brazila i Argentine, kada je u pitanju južnoamerički kontinent. S druge strane, klubovi koji nisu u mogućnosti da pariraju ponudama bogatim klubovima, su primorani da se fokusiraju na druge, manje atraktivne zemlje Južne Amerike, poput Urugvaja, Paragvaja ili Venecuele. Tada presudnu ulogu ima pokrivenost mreže skauta kao i njihovo poznavanje uslova na posmatranim, „egzotičnim“, fudbalskim destinacijama (Bierman, 2009).

UTICAJ DIGITALIZACIJE NA SKAUTING

Iako se ljudski faktor i dalje može smatrati najvažnijim i nezaobilaznim faktorom kada je u pitanju skauting talenata, ne može se zanemariti rastući uticaj digitalizacije, odnosno primene sofisticirane sportske tehnologije i savremenih softvera u procesu skautinga. Savremeni skauti u sportu postaju sve više zavisni od softverskih programa i aplikacija u cilju evaluacije talenata (pregled fizičke spremnosti, taktički pregled, praćenje nastupa timova/ pojedinaca i dr.). Softverski zasnovan skauting često zahteva stručna znanja

u primenu naprednih i vrlo složenih softverskih sistema. Ova vrsta skautinga podrazumeva proces prikupljanja podataka iz različitih izvora i primenu određenih matematičkih modela kojima se predviđa uspeh ili neuspeh igrača ili tima.

Pojavom softverskih paketa poput poznatog *''Fudbal Menadžer''* (*Football Manager*), proces prikupljanja podataka je znatno ubrzan, s tim da ključnu ulogu u analiziranju i tumačenju prikupljenih podataka i dalje imaju skauti. U okviru Fudbal Menadžera, najbitnije osobine dobrog skauta su opisane izrazima *''judging ability''* i *''judging potential''*, što predstavlja umeće i sposobnost prepoznavanja pravog potencijala. Dobar skaut će na pravi način predvideti napredak i potencijal određenog igrača, što je naročito korisno za klubove koji svoju igru zasnivaju na mlađim, nedovoljno afirmisanim igračima koji će vremenom i iskustvom postati vrhunski fudbaleri. Fudbal Menadžer omogućava da se skauti pošalju na različite misije i u različite zemlje preko opcije *''Scouting Assignments''*, čime dodatno proširuju svoja znanja i veštine na nivou kluba. Kao i u realnom životu, u okviru Fudbal Menadžera predviđeno je da skauti dostavljaju detaljne izveštaje, koji sadrže sve potrebne informacije vezane za određenog igrača: karakter, dobre i loše strane, trenutnu fizičku formu, kvalitet, maksimalno dostignuće, informaciju o transferu i dr. I softversko rešenje za posao skautinga ne zamagljuje suštinu - dobri skauti olakšavaju posao menadžerima i omogućavaju im da se fokusiraju na druge aspekte svog posla.

Srpsko-austrijska startup tehnološka kompanija *''Playerhunter''* se 2017. godine našla na listi top 50 najinovativnijih sportskih kompanija na svetu u organizaciji HYPE fondacije. *''Playerhunter''* predstavlja besplatnu sportsku platformu, odnosno društvenu mrežu za regrutovanje koja omogućava sportistima, klubovima, menadžerima i skautima da se povežu i ostvare saradnju. Vizija *''Playerhunter''* je digitalizacija komunikacije u sportu i omogućavanje svim zainteresovanim za fudbal da budu uspešni u svojim karijerama, bez obzira na to odakle dolaze i koje početne uslove imaju. Kao poseban cilj ova Kompanija ima povećanje vidljivosti igrača nižih liga koji inače nemaju šansu da se adekvatno predstavljaju na tržištu (Ekapija, 2019). *''Playerhunter''* je prva kompanija izvan Velike Britanije koja je dobila podršku Virgin Startup programa i velikom brzinom ostvaruje svoje planove i ciljeve kada je reč o broju korisnika i mogućnostima njene platforme. Kompanija je pokrenula kampanju javnog prikupljanja novčanih sredstava (*''crowdfunding''*) sa ciljem da poboljša aplikaciju i uključi do million korisnika u 2019. godini, kao i da uveća monetizaciju kompanije. Ova vrsta finansiranja omogućava da svaki punoletni pojedinac investira u određeni projekat i postane njegov suvlasnik (Centar za transfer tehnologije, 2019). Ciljana suma od 500.000 funti je premašena za više od 70.000 funti, te je *''Playerhunter''*, preko crowdfunding kampanje, finansirao digitalnu

platformu za povezivanje menadžera, fudbalera, klubova, trenera, skauta i celog fudbalskog sveta na jednom mestu. U javnosti se "Playerhunter" često opisuje i kao „*LinkedIn za sport*".

ZAKLJUČAK

U savremenom fudbalu se kontinuirano odigravaju novi, zanimljivi događaji, koji utiču da fudbal neprikosnovenno zadrži poziciju broj jedan u kolektivnim sportovima u XXI veku. Sa ekonomskog aspekta, na fudbal se odavno posmatra kao na vrlo unosan biznis, gde fudbalski klubovi moraju da posluju po tržišnim principima karakterističnim za velike multinacionalne korporacije ukoliko žele da budu konkurentni na sportskom tržištu.

S druge strane, brz razvoj nauke o sportu i sportske industrije, i novi trendovi u sportu nameću pravac razvoja sporta u budućnosti. Visok nivo profesionalizacije fudbala, kao sportske grane, u svim selekcijama, od najmlađih uzrasnih kategorija pa do seniorskih ekipa, prate značajna finansijska sredstva i ulaganja. Fudbal u današnje vreme podrazumeva angažovanje multidisciplinarnih profesionalaca, odnosno stručnjaka u sportu iz različitih oblasti: marketinga, tržišta, advertajzinga, prava, finansija itd. U jednom takvom ambijentu, neizostavnu i nezamenljivu komponentu čine skauti, kao sportski stručnjaci zaduženi za praćenje i identifikovanje novih talenata u sportu. Talentovanih fudbalera ima puno, na svim svetskim meridijanima, ali talenat sam po sebi nije dovoljan za vrhunska sportska dostignuća. U radu su predstavljene osnovne karakteristike zanimanja profesionalnog skauta, prepoznatog kao jedno od ključnih zanimanja u razvoju mladih igrača i njihovu transformaciju u vrhunske sportiste. Cilj rada je da ukaže na specifičnost poslova skautinga kao i na aktuelnim tendencijama u ovoj profesiji, koji pored ostalog, podrazumevaju i snažan uticaj informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija u kreiranju novih trendova u skautingu. Rad je namenjen svim fudbalskim stručnjacima i naučnim radnicima zainteresovanim za oblast identifikovanja mladih talenata u sportu, i ima za cilj da putem teorijskih i empirijskih odrednica ukaže na koristi koje jedna, dobro organizovana i osmišljena, skauting služba doprinosi razvoju i uspehu svakog fudbalskog kluba. U krajnjoj instanci, korist imaju svi ljubitelji fudbala jer se zahvaljujući ulozi skauta kontinuirano odvija izgradnja vrhunskih sportista u igri u kojoj uživaju milioni gledalaca

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Professional paper

ROLE OF FOOTBALL SCOUTS IN PLAYER TRANSFORMATION PROCESS: FROM TALENTED TO ELITE ATHLETE

UDK 005.332:796.332.075
796.332:159.928.23

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Abstract: Revenues generated by football clubs belonging to one of the so-called "The Big Five" leagues (England, Germany, Spain, Italy and France) give a strong argument by claiming that modern football has become a very organized, but also profitable business. In the football clubs of the mentioned European countries, the most famous players of today are "super heroes" and they are the reason why massive numbers of football fans visit football stadiums. All players, who today identify themselves as elite athletes, were at the beginning of their sports careers merely talented individuals with more or less pronounced psycho-physical predispositions for playing sports. This paper will present the basic characteristics of the profession of professional scouts as one of the key persons in recognizing talents and their transformation into top athletes. Also, the paper emphasizes the necessary skills that these sports experts should possess, but also points out the importance of decision-making in terms of often difficult and complicated decisions in the process of identifying talented individuals in sports..

Key words: *scouting, talent, predispositions, football, elite sport.*

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INTRODUCTION

As one of the most popular and widespread team sports in the world, football has become a very lucrative business in the XXI century. On the other hand, throughout history, football as a game did not undergo essential changes so we can still talk about the „beautiful game“ enjoyed by millions of watchers on football stadiums and tv screens. Today, football is a sport that has integrative function, connecting different nations, cultures and continents, but it was not always treated that way and especially observed as a profitable branch.

The first forms of ball play occurred 3000 years ago in China. However, in its present form, football is mostly related to the mid 19th century England, when the first rules of the game of football were defined at the Cambridge University in 1848, after which football developed as a movement through formation of the first football clubs and associations. The first football club in the world was Sheffield United F.C., founded in England in 1885, while the oldest football association in the world was also founded in England in 1863 (Macdonald, 2010, 10-11).

Industrial revolution, development and the expansion of cities throughout the world enabled the expansion of the popularity of football. At the beginning of the 20th century, football gained a new social dimension, becoming a game predominantly played by the working class (Macdonald, 2010, 12). The first elements of football as a lucrative activity emerged in the 1904/1905 season, when Newcastle United F.C. made a ticket sales turnover of GBP25.000 (Macdonald, 2010, 102). Of course, in today's football world, this amount is insignificant, since in the 21st century football surpassed many economic branches in terms of financial turnover and profitability.

FOOTBALL AS GROWING BUSINESS IN 21st CENTURY

Global trends, fast development of sports science (technology of sports training, IT in sports) and sports industry outlined the path for future development of sport (Savić, et al., 2017). Modern football, as well as other sports, underwent certain changes in the past few decades. Changes of the type and approach to play, greater demands from athletes (football players) in terms of psychophysical abilities, complexity and demandingness of the selection process, especially identification of young athletes by anticipating the development of specific football predispositions, implementation of modern and complex diagnostic methods in the assessment of morphological-functional, motor and psychological abilities (Trunić, & Mladenović, 2014), need that educated sports professionals are engaged in work with the youngest

age categories – all these things are just some of the factors that conditioned changes in football as a sports branch. It is also worth mentioning that special importance for many aspects of the game of football lies in the maximum professionalization of football from the youngest age categories, which is accompanied by significant financial funds and investments.

Not only has football become a lucrative business, but the way of analysis and measuring performance in football underwent major changes. Both financial and non-financial parameters are considered to compare clubs' performance, including: average number of visits to stadiums, worldwide fan base, media coverage and sports achievement in terms of score. By combining different parameters, Deloitte Sports Business Group publishes an annual list of top 20 European clubs according to: their ability to generate income on game day (including individual and group ticket sale), sale of television rights (including broadcasting rights when participating in domestic championship and cup competitions and European club competitions) and other commercial financial sources (sponsorships, jersey and souvenir sale in official club stores, stadium tours, and other commercial activities).

In the 2017/2018 report, Deloitte Sports Business Group states that the official European champion for that season, Spanish Real Madrid F.C., became the first club whose total revenue exceeded EUR700 million, as it made extraordinary EUR750.9 million of revenues. The second place was occupied by Barcelona F.C. with EUR690.4 million, and the EUR60.5 million difference between the two leading teams on the list was the second biggest ever between the first two teams observed according to the total revenue criterion.

The common characteristic of the top 20 European clubs list is that all those clubs belong to the group of the so-called "The Big Five" leagues, i.e. top five European championships, namely the English Premier League, German Bundesliga, Spanish Primera, Italian Serie A, and French Ligue 1. The top 20 football clubs according to the revenue generated in 2017/2018 season included: nine clubs from England, four clubs from Italy, three clubs from Spain and Germany, respectively, and one club from France. Observed cumulatively, the revenues generated by the top 20 European clubs hit a record amount of EUR8.3 billion, which represents a EUR400 million increase in comparison with the 2016/2017 list. The structure of the generated EUR8.3 billion was as follows: 17% of revenues came from ticket sale on game day, 43% based on the sale of broadcasting rights and 40% came from commercial sources (Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2019). If only ten of the top European clubs in the 2017/2018 season are observed, the clubs' total revenue was EUR5.7 billion, which is 68.7% of the total revenues generated by the top 20 clubs. Table 1 presents an overview of the top 10 European clubs according to total revenue generated in the 2017/2018 season.

Table 1 *Top 10 clubs according to total revenue*
Source: Authors based on Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2019

No.	Football club	Total revenue (mln EUR)
1	Real Madrid	750,9
2	Barcelona	690,4
3	Manchester United	666,0
4	Bayern Munchen	629,2
5	Manchester City	568,4
6	Paris Saint-Germain	541,7
7	Liverpool	513,7
8	Chelsea	505,7
9	Arsenal	439,2
10	Tottenham	428,3
Total for top 10 clubs:		5.733,5
<i>Total for top 20 clubs:</i>		<i>8.344,6</i>

The structure of the total revenue for the top 10 European clubs is presented on Picture 1.

Picture 1 *Structure of total revenue for top 10 clubs*
in 2017/2018 season (in mln EUR)
Source: Authors based on Deloitte Sports Business Group (2019)

The financial results of football clubs represent just a “tip of the iceberg” and reflect how well football clubs do business in conditions adapted to modern day challenges. Essentially, the people behind the aforementioned impressive financial revenue results are direct “manufacturers”, i.e. players on the field. For a long time now, enormous player transfer values are no news. For example, the transfer of Brazilian Neymar from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain for EUR222 million was in the limelight (BBC Sport, 2017); as well as the transfer of Frenchman Paul Pogba from Juventus to Manchester United for EUR 105 million (Transfermarkt, 2019) and many others. Before these football players became globally famous, they too were merely talented players, for whom no one could assess with certainty that they would achieve top careers.

The central point of this paper is the function of scouting service in football clubs, i.e. the impact of “people behind the scenes” who are in charge of identifying and anticipating the talent of players predisposed to become elite athletes. The accent here is on scouts’ knowledge, skills and characteristics, as they are indispensable team members in modern football, whose abilities largely affect the end result (success) of every football club.

PROFESSION OF FOOTBALL TALENT SCOUTS

Identifying and selecting talents in sport is a complex and dynamic process that has become one of the central topics of sports science in the past few decades (Den Hartigh, Niessen, Frencken, & Meijer, 2018; Gonçalves, Rama, & Figueiredo, 2012). It is a fact that a multidimensional approach is necessary to define the term talent in sport. Therefore, most authors define talent in sport as a combination of genetically acquired morphological characteristics, psycho-motor, functional, cognitive and social abilities, and a degree of intrinsic motivation and creativity of an individual (Čoh, 2019, Malina, 2010).

In most countries, in the period of early specialization in sport and observing young talents, the key role in identifying potential elite athletes (football players) during the training process and games is played by sports experts, above all coaches and scouts. The ability to recognize talent in sport provides clubs and national teams with quality and prestige in terms of investing into the “right” players, which represents efficient management of human and material resources, as well as time. However, most problems emerge when there is no comprehensive national sports and educational system, which envisages systemic and strategic identification of young talented athletes, as well as when there are no objective, science-based indicators of sports selection.

Based on their material abilities, professional knowledge, competences, perception and intuitive evaluation, a scout assesses athletes' (football players') abilities and performance. Talent scouting involves the process of monitoring and evaluation of talented football players, whose final stage can result in a player signing a contract with the scout's club. In that sense, certain scouts are primarily focused on monitoring young players with pronounced talent, in whom they see future football "stars". Smaller football clubs are mostly focused on scouting within their region or country, while larger and richer football clubs have a widespread, global scouting network. A high level of mutual confidence should exist between managers and coaches in football clubs on one side, and scouts on the other side, because very complex and important decisions concerning player transfers can be made based on scouts' detailed reports. A distinction should certainly be underlined between scouting of young players of different age categories and players who already play in clubs at different competitive levels. This paper will mostly look into scouting of football players of young age categories.

As this paper already notes, in football – as well as most sports – talent is determined by anthropometric, physiological-motor, psychological and social predictors (Baker, Cobley, & Schorer, 2012). On the other hand, talent identification and its further development (Mills et al., 2012) represent key points in potential creation of future elite athletes. Most authors underline five stages on the way to top sports results (Vaeyens, et al. 2008; Williams, & Reilly, 2000), and those are:

- 1) talent detection stage – this refers to detecting those talents that are estimated to possess adequate predispositions, without being actively involved in sports competitions;
- 2) talent identification stage – this is a process of identification of potential elite athletes as well as prediction of achievements based on a multidisciplinary approach to assessment of their physical, physiological, psychological, genetic, sociological and technical potentials and characteristics;
- 3) talent development stage – this implies providing each individual with conditions to learn and develop potential in line with their physical, mental, social and emotional characteristics;
- 4) confirmation stage – this stage involves monitoring, verification and confirmation of the speed of an athlete's predispositions necessary to achieve success in sport; and
- 5) selection stage – this stage represents a selection of the best, i.e. identification of those players or groups of players who will be able to execute set tasks in a certain sports context.

Those five key stages in talent identification and development are presented on Picture 2.

Picture 2: *Stage of talent identification and development in sport*

Patience and studiousness represent important characteristics of a football scout. Scouts are patient and persistent in monitoring football matches, but also the behaviour of talented football players before they make a decision to hire a player. The first level of evaluation mostly involves conclusion whether a player possesses the necessary technical and other characteristics to succeed in sport, and then, depending on those characteristics, scouts analyze the player's abilities in relation to the demands of certain positions within a team. This way they estimate and anticipate the predispositions that a football player must possess to perform certain roles and tasks, which they can successfully execute and achieve in team play. That is the selection stage in sport and it enables an athlete during the monitoring process to put forward all their psychophysical predispositions and abilities to cover a certain position within a team.

Players within a team have significantly different roles, and in line with this a clear difference should be made between desirable characteristics of players in different positions (Musculus & Lobinger, 2018):

- *Goalkeeper*: it requires good reflex; communication with close defense line; ability to engage players "one-on-one"; good spatial orientation; ability to organize and assign defensive tasks to other players;
- *Central back*: it requires good jumping and ball turnover abilities; height, courage and uncompromising play in duels; focus; play overview: spatial orientation;
- *Full-back*: it requires speed; stamina; reliability in keeping up with opposing players;

- *Central midfielder*: it requires strength; stamina; the ability to pass the ball precisely; positioning; play overview; creativity; change the rhythm of the game;
- *Winger*: it takes speed; technical characteristics (above all dribbling and ball control); creativity; and
- *Striker*: it requires realization abilities; calm and composure in final moments; technical characteristics; speed; speed of reaction; good anticipation of situations; good orientation for movement without the ball; excellent technical kicking skills.

After a scout recommends a player to a football club, the club can choose to monitor the player's progress in the following period. Scouts assess whether a player shows consistency in terms of shape throughout the season (i.e. how prone to oscillations they are), then they assess their team work abilities, i.e. a player's responsibility and behaviour within a group and many other aspects. Also, there is an option to invite a player to a trial period in a club if they initially satisfy the general requirements. At the test, scouts and a team of coaches assess the suitability and ability to subordinate a player's personality to the team, as well as their attitude and behaviour during practice (Giacobbi et al., 2012). During the trial, it is possible to determine the good and bad sides of every player in relation to the existing team and make an assessment of the benefits of their potential involvement in the group. It is very important to note that certain clubs do not let their players who are bound by contracts to go for trials in other clubs due to potential injuries and uncertainty regarding further realization of the transfer. After players trials are finished and all the necessary assessments collected, a club that is satisfied with what they saw begin negotiations about a player's further engagement.

The club's decision to hire a talented player is the result of a comprehensive process which involves a review of all the aspects based on interaction of all interested parties. A football club management particularly estimates the expert opinion of their coach/manager who makes the final assessment about hiring a player based on their extensive experience and work with players of different characteristics (Jones et al., 2010). Experienced coaches can base their judgement on a representative sample of players they worked with in the past, and who comprise very different personalities, abilities and levels of success. Thanks to their work and experience, coaches can estimate and predict with a degree of certainty both current and future potential of a player. When a player's characteristics completely fit into the concept, philosophy and preference system of a coach, that is when the final deal is made with the player and their agents regarding the terms of the contract.

KEY DUTIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF TALENT SCOUTS

A well-organized and efficient scouting service also means great financial savings for every football club. Of course, if a club's financial power is limited, that makes their scouting service's work much more complex. Scouting is a rather challenging, demanding and intensive job. Scouting talents involves the assessment of giftedness of young players at the beginning of their career, providing a final grade after detailed analyses and reports on players' characteristics.

Some of the key characteristics of a successful scout are: readiness to have flexible working hours; readiness to travel frequently; readiness to work overtime and take over responsibility for the decisions they made; excellent communication and organization skills; professionalism and high degree of reliability; good team working skills; good perception and reasoning skills; knowledge of work in modern softwares; ability to easily establish and maintain contacts (Salford City, 2019). However, it is very complicated to find a unique answer to the question: How to detect a talented football player?

A former scout of English football clubs Tottenham, Westham and Portsmouth, *Robert Walker*, underlined that once the life of a scout involved many working hours and travels, changeable times, observing several (even three to four) games a day (BBC UK, 2019). After that, scouts would phone their club and point out potential talented players who they believed deserved a chance. The process would be finalized by organizing a meeting with parents and making an offer for a trial in the club with covered transportation costs. Yet, significant innovations occurred in the last decade of the 20th century, so scouting includes submitting various reports that cover a wide range of aspects related to the game of football, such as: height, weight, speed, agility, playing intelligence, physical and mental strength. It is clear from Robert Walker's decade-long experience that talent is a necessary condition for players' success, but that achieving top sports results requires work ethics, will and mental strength for overcoming obstacles, as well as passion (strive) to return to the path of success after the first disappointment and failure in sports segment. Still, Walker considers that the foundations of scouting remain unchanged, i.e. that scouting will never evolve so much to be treated as an exact science. On the contrary, he believes that scouts will have to rely on their own instinct above all. Top sports results and competitions require persons who will be resistant to physical and mental loads and pressures. For talented players, the key to succes is in hard work and improvement, persistence, learning and sacrifice.

In addition to playing intelligence, a determining factor is also coordination ability, because in difficult situations in the field, a player must

largely rely on their instinct, and a precondition for that are good coordination of movement and automatization. Quite frequently, scouts identify themselves with players whose talent they detected, so it is a special moment of satisfaction for a scout to see their players achieve excellent sports success. A scout's key duties include the following activities (Salford City, 2019):

- Involvement in local, regional and national scouting networks in order to identify new talents;
- Designing a clear scouting strategy;
- Day-to-day cooperation with club managers and coaches on talent identification;
- Understanding the philosophy and way of functioning of the club so as to enable an optimal process of search for talents;
- Designing various reports that include all relevant data considering talented players;
- Building and maintaining relationships with local amateur and professional clubs;
- Defining the policy of monitoring talented players and their scores;
- Keeping up with the latest trends and techniques in the domain of scouting.

A positive example of successful scouting is the scouting service of Borussia Dortmund F.C. A central figure in the system is *Markus Pilawa*, a 40-year-old from Bochum, who became the Chief Scout of Borussia and developed a plan to hire the best teenagers from entire Germany and abroad. At his disposal, Pilawa has 20 scouts whose aim is to get in touch with their preferred player at young categories' games before the competition does. They most frequently scout children aged 12-15. Somewhat older players are also monitored, and for the 16-18 year olds scouting is conducted outside Germany, too (mostly in the Netherlands and Belgium). Age limit has been raised so it is not permitted to bring in foreigners younger than 16, and for non-EU countries, the limit is set at the age of 18. For example, for that reason Switzerland is less attractive for Borussia scouts, because football players aged 18, 19 or 20 are mostly beyond the German club's financial potential (Mozzartsport, 2019).

LIMITATIONS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN SCOUTING

When making a decision concerning hiring a player, there are multiple aspects that may blur a scout's perception. Namely, there are significant differences in the way player monitoring is conducted – directly in the football field or indirectly on a TV screen. Also, a player's country of origin affects

the perception of numerous coaches or managers. It is generally known that players from South America (Brazil and Argentina) are considered magical dribblers and artists with ball more than Scandinavian players or Southeast European players, as future elite players (Bierman, 2009). On one hand, such an opinion is somewhat justified, because it is highly likely that an average Brazilian football players will be technically and tactically more talented, and their process of learning and mastering training elements will be significantly faster than in case of players from less attractive countries. However, on the other side, such generalizations are completely wrong, because there are players in Brazil and Argentina who do not possess high technical performances. At the same time, certain extraordinarily talented players from less known countries, such as Finland (famous Finnish football players Jari Litmanen, who had an excellent career in Dutch Ajax F.C., and then played in Spanish Barcelona F.C. and English Liverpool F.C.) or Serbia, can have superb technical giftedness. An example of how difficult it is to make a breakthrough in the global football scene if a player comes from an unattractive country is that of Bulgarian football player Dimitar Berbatov, who despite his undeniable talent had to take a detour through German Bayer Leverkusen F.C. and English Tottenham F.C. to reach the peak of his career in famous English Manchester United F.C. (Bierman, 2009).

Certain decisions to hire talented players are occasionally made for culturological reasons. It should be no surprise that a large number of Scandinavian players found their place in the English Premier League, or that Polish players most frequently play in the German Bundesliga. The economic conditions in football clubs largely dictate the possibility of player transfers from countries recognized as a source of talented young players. Logically, wealthier football clubs will focus on players from Brazil and Argentina, when it comes to South America. On the other side, clubs that are not able to match wealthy clubs' offers, are forced to focus on other, less attractive South American countries, such as Uruguay, Paraguay and Venezuela. At that point, the coverage of a scout's network plays a crucial role, as well as their knowledge of conditions on monitored, "exotic" football destinations (Bierman, 2009).

IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION ON SCOUTING

Even though human factor can still be considered the most important and inevitable factor when it comes to talent scouting, one cannot neglect the growing impact of digitalization, i.e. the implementation of sophisticated sports technology and modern software throughout the scouting process. Modern scouts in sport become increasingly dependent on software programmes and

applications in terms of talent evaluation (overview of physical condition, tactical overview, monitoring the performance of teams/individuals, etc.). Software-based scouting often requires professional knowledge to implement advanced and rather complex software systems. This type of scouting implies the process of data collection from various sources, and the implementation of certain mathematical models that predict a team/player's success or failure.

The appearance of software packages such as the well-known "*Football Manager*" significantly speeded up data collection process, with scouts still holding the key role in analyzing and interpreting collected data. Within *Football Manager*, the crucial skills for a good scouts are described with terms such as "judging ability" and "judging potential", which represents a skill and ability to recognize true potential. A good scout will adequately predict a player's progress and potential, which is particularly useful for clubs which base their play on younger, insufficiently affirmed players who will become elite football players after some time and acquired experience. *Football Manager* can send scouts to different missions and countries using the option "Scouting Assignments", which enables them to additionally enlarge their knowledge and skills at the club level. As well as in real life, *Football Managers* envisages that scouts submit detailed reports, which contain the necessary information related to a certain player: character, good and bad sides, current physical shape, quality, top achievement, transfer information, etc. A software solution for scouting does not deny the essence – that good scouts make things easier for managers, and enable them to focus on other aspects of their job.

In 2017, a Serbian-Austrian technology startup "*Playerhunter*" made it to the HYPE foundation's list of top 50 most innovative sports companies in the world. "*Playerhunter*" is a free sports platform, i.e. a social network for recruitment, which allows athletes, clubs, managers and scouts to make connections and arrange cooperation. "*Playerhunter's*" vision is to digitalize communication in sport and enable all those interested in football to have successful careers, regardless of their origin and starting conditions. One of the Company's special goals is to increase the visibility of lower league players who otherwise have no other chance to present themselves adequately on the market (Ekapija, 2019). "*Playerhunter*" is the first company outside the UK which received support from the Virgin Startup programme and very quickly realize its plans and goals concerning the number of users and the potentials of its platform. The company started a crowdfunding campaign with an aim to improve its application and include up to a million of users in 2019, but also to boost the company's monetization. This type of financing enables every adult individual to invest into a certain project and become their co-owner (Centar za transfer tehnologije, 2019). The targeted sum of GBP500,000 was missed by over GBP70,000, so through the crowdfunding campaign, "*Playhunter*"

funded the entire digital platform that serves to connect managers, football players, clubs, coaches, scouts and the entire football world in a single place. In the public, “Playhunter” is frequently described as “*Sports LinkedIn*”.

CONCLUSION

New, interesting events constantly occur in modern football, enabling it to maintain undisputed top position in team sports in the 21st century. From the economic aspect, football has long been observed as a very lucrative business, where football clubs must abide by market principles characteristic of large multinational corporations if they seek to be competitive in the sports market.

On the other side, fast development of science about sport and sports industry, and the latest trends in sport impose the direction of sport’s future development. A high level of professionalization of football, as a branch of sport, in all selections – from the youngest age categories to senior teams – is accompanied by substantial financial means and investments. Today, football implies engagement of multidisciplinary professionals, i.e. sports experts from various fields: marketing, market, advertizing, law, finances, etc. In such an environment, scouts are an inevitable and irreplaceable component, as sports experts in charge of monitoring and identifying new talents in sport. There are numerous talented football players all over the world, but talent itself is not enough for top sports results. This paper presents the basic characteristics of the work of a professional scout, recognized as one of the key professions in the development of young players and their transformation into elite athletes. The aim of this paper is to point to the specificity of scouting job, as well as the current tendencies in this profession, which also imply strong impact of information and communication technologies in creating new scouting trends. The paper is intended for all football and scientific professionals interested in the field of identification young talents in sport, and its goal is to use theoretical and empirical determinants to underline the benefits a well-organized and designed scouting service contributes to the development and success of each football club. Ultimately, all football fans benefit this way because thanks to the role of scouts, there is a constant flow of elite athletes in this game enjoyed by millions of viewers.

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