

CHAPTER 3

ADAPTATIONS AND INCLUSION STRATEGIES FOR ID

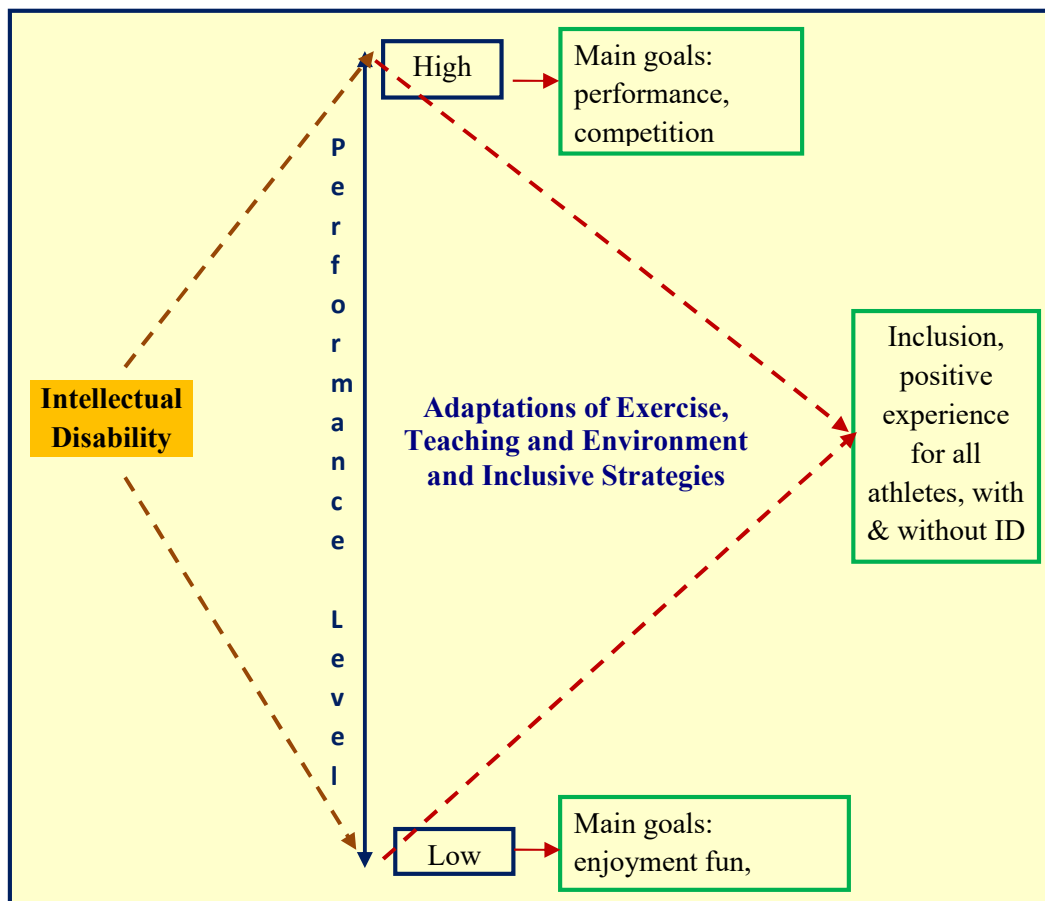
Reading this chapter, you will learn about:

- Exercise, environment and teaching adaptations for PWID.
- Inclusion strategies for PWID.

Ensuring inclusion in PE and sport settings does not only require the placement of the individual with ID as a physical presence. The sport coach must possess the necessary knowledge to provide equal sport opportunities through careful adaptations of exercise, teaching and environment during training so as to enhance positive social interactions and satisfy the needs of all sport team participants, with and without ID.

Regardless of the varying performance level of each trainee with ID, the primary concern and constant pursuit of the sport coach should always be the inclusion of participants with ID in PE and sport settings and the acquisition of a positive experience, that will create the desire to continue participation in sports as a mean of improving their health and quality of life.

Figure 1: Performance level, adaptations and inclusion goals for participants with ID



Physical Activity Adaptations for Individuals with ID

The way every sport coach structures the environment, selects activities and presents information to participants with ID, often makes the difference between success and failure. Improvement of psychomotor skills and maximization of performance of individuals with ID is an objective that can be accomplished only through quality teaching and guidance implemented by the sport coach, by adopting some of the following representative physical activity (PA) adaptations (Kokaridas, 2016) in each exercise session:

Table 1. Adaptations of Physical Activity for Individuals with ID

PA Adaptations for Individuals with ID	
Environment adaptations	<p>Structure of a clean and secure PE environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With objects not used put aside to specific areas. • By teaching participant, the rules and limitations of the exercise space used. • With close monitoring of participants during each lesson. • By increasing attention span of the athlete using larger in size or brighter in colour objects, introducing new activities, using his/her name, maintaining visual contact, etc. <p>Reinforcement of teaching stimuli by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using bright colour in specific material/ objects within a neutral in color learning environment. • Limiting exercise space and adapting material when necessary to promote successful execution of activities. • Using sound (e.g. whistle, etc). • Practicing in front of mirrors placed on the gym's wall to increase concentration.
Teaching adaptations	<p>Teaching should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal instructions shortened and simplified down to specific action words. • Proper tone of voice according to exercise. • Performing one activity at a time and use of task analysis (breaking

	<p>down skills into sequential tasks) when necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of mode for transmitting information (visual, tactile, auditory). • Frequent demonstration of activities accompanying verbal instructions. • Use of kinesthetic guidance when needed. • Continuous encouragement and use of feedback to enhance short-term memory. • Provision of additional time to the student to react in teaching stimuli, maintaining visual contact with the student for a few seconds after activity demonstration. • Co-operation enhancement using peer activities and cross-age tutoring.
<p>Activity adaptations</p>	<p>Exercises selected should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus more on participation and less on performance. • Be simple and playful so as to enhance enjoyment and a feeling of success. • Help the participant develop his kinesthetic ability and directionality of body in space. • Function within the present level of student's performance, moving progressively from familiar to unfamiliar and from simple to more difficult. • Promote the development of basic motor skills of stabilization, locomotion and handling and athlete's general physical condition. • Be rule simple. • Include common elements so as to promote learning. • Characterized by variability that is considered necessary especially in the case of participants with attention deficits.

As also mentioned, Down Syndrome individuals possess not only physical but other certain characteristics that separates them from the rest ID population, and they are directly related to additional exercise adaptations needed during PA sessions and sports compared to other participants of ID without DS. These characteristics are:

Table 2. DS characteristics related to exercise

Characteristics of Individuals with DS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Muscle hypotonia and joint looseness with abnormal range of motion - hyperflexibility- compared to individuals with ID without DS.• Delays in the initial manifestation of motor skills such as walking and the emergence of postural reactions due to low muscle tone.• Flatfoot due to hyperflexibility that affects foot joints.• Atlantoaxial instability that is present in approximately 12-20% of people with DS, an orthopedic problem that may occur with forceful forward or backward bending of the neck, causing spinal cord damage.• Lower aerobic power due to respiratory and cardiovascular limitations.• Lower muscle strength, especially of lower extremities.• Asymmetrical strength, with left side limbs stronger than limbs on the right.• Lower overall motor performance, compared to persons with ID without DS.• Slower reaction time to external stimuli.• Left handedness that limits the ability of persons with DS to mimic right-hand participants without DS during activities.• Protruded abdominal muscles in young age, with 90% of young children with DS having an umbilical hernia that is usually corrected later on its own.• Obesity, health and sensory concerns.• Advantage in activities that require flexibility and rhythm.

As a result, additional adjustments that can be made to physical activity sessions for participants with Down Syndrome (Kokaridas, 2016), include:

Table 3. DS and additional exercise adaptations

PA Adaptations for Individuals with DS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine fitness activities with music, since these activities are particularly popular to people with DS, improve aerobic capacity and promote motor learning and practice. Most individuals with DS excel in rhythmic movement and dance.• Select exercises that involve activation of large muscle groups so as to cope with muscle hypotonia and improve physical fitness.

- Select strengthening exercises especially of muscles around the joints and lower limbs.
- Select activities that require successive lifting of the feet from the ground to address flat footedness.
- Focus on balance exercises, to improve balance deficits that limit learning of fundamental motor skills.
- Provide extra time to individuals with DS to respond to external stimuli, due to the slower reaction time that characterizes the syndrome.
- Carefully select the abdominal exercises.
- Avoid exercises that cause hyperflexion and put stress on the body that could result in dislocations and strains.
- Avoid any exercise that places pressure on the head and neck muscles that may cause spinal cord damage to people with DS and atlantoaxial instability. Special Olympics requires medical clearance that indicates absence of this condition, otherwise sport coaches should not allow athletes with DS to participate in any sport or activity (e.g. gymnastics, butterfly stroke and diving start in swimming etc) that requires any forceful forward or backward bending of the neck during exercise.

Apart from the general adaptations mentioned for athletes with ID with and without DS, all sport coaches need practical material with applied examples and training session paradigms that are sport - specific. In this regard, Special Olympics provide a full coaching guide for each sport, with ‘rich’ and easily understood context.

Table 4: Special Olympics Sports: Practical material & training examples

SPECIAL OLYMPICS	
Summer Sports	Practical material & training examples specific to sport
Athletics	http://read.nxtbook.com/special_olympics/guide_books/athletics_coaching_guide_2017/athletics_coaching_guide_2017.html
Badminton	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/badminton/index.ph

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Basketball	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/basketball/index.php#p#/p/Cover1
Bocce	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/bocce/index.php#/p/Cover
Bowling	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/bowling/index.php#/p/Cover
Competitive Cheer	https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/competitive-cheer/Sports-Essentials-Competitive-Cheer-Routine-Skills-Reference-Sheet-2019.pdf
Cricket	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/cricket/index.php#/p/Cover
Cycling	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/cycling/index.php#/p/Cover
Equestrian	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/equestrian/index.php#/p/Cover
Football	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/football/index.php#/p/Cover
Golf	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/golf/index.php#/p/Cover
Gymnastics	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/gymnastics/index.php#/p/Cover
Rhythmic Gymnastics	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/artisticgymnastics/index.php#/p/Cover1 http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/rhythmicgymnastics/index.php#/p/Cover1
Handball	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/handball/index.php#/p/Cover1
Judo	https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/sports-and-coaching/judo
Kayaking	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/kayaking/index.php#/p/Cover
Motor Activity Training	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/matp/index.php#/p/

Program	Cover
Netball	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/netball/index.php#/p/Cover
Open Water Swimming	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/openwaterswimming/index.php#/p/Cover
Powerlifting	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/powerlifting/index.php#/p/Cover
Roller Skating	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/rollerskating/index.php#/p/Cover
Sailing	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/sailing/index.php#/p/Cover
Softball	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/softball/index.php#/p/Cover
Swimming	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/aquatics/index.php#/p/Cover
Table Tennis	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/tabletennis/index.php#/p/Cover
Tennis	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/tennis/index.php#/p/Cover
Triathlon	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/triathlon/index.php#/p/Cover
Volleyball	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/volleyball/index.php#/p/Cover
Winter Sports	Practical material & training examples specific to sport
Alpine Skiing	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/alpineskiing/index.php#/p/Cover
Cross-Country Skiing	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/crosscountryskiing/index.php#/p/Cover
Figure Skating	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/figureskating/index.php#/p/Cover
Floorball	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/floorball/index.php#/p/Cover

Floor Hockey	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/floorhockey/index.php#/p/Cover
Short Track Speed Skating	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/shorttrackspeedskating/index.php#/p/Cover
Snowboarding	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/snowboarding/index.php#/p/Cover
Snowshoeing	http://digitalguides.specialolympics.org/snowshoeing/index.php#/p/Cover

Participants with ID - with and without DS - can successfully perform at slower rates compared to their peers without ID. In cases of mild and moderate ID, exercise programs should focus more on improving general physical fitness, gross and fine motor skills and basic stabilization, movement and handling skills, in a consistent and progressive manner. In participants with severe ID the exercise program should aim more at teaching self-help and object-handling skills, by selecting activities that are more likely to be used at home, at school and in society in general, so as to promote self-efficacy, socialization, communication, personal sense of accomplishment and mainly participation than performance through play, fun, and recreation.

Inclusion Strategies

As a first challenge for sport coaches in creating an inclusive environment is to identify their own personal beliefs and expectations about their participants with ID who differ in performance compared to coaches' previous experience as athletes (Sherrill, 2004). Next task is to provide an enjoyable and successful learning experience, ensuring that all participants with ID achieve success and are equally respected and supported by their peers without disabilities.

In fact, many participants with ID participate in inclusive sport and recreational programs in diverse environments ranging from inclusive school settings to Unified Sports of Special Olympics, in which teams are composed by equal numbers of athletes with and without ID (Winnick, 2016). Nevertheless, differences in structure and content of disability sports concerning accessibility, available resources, social support and cooperation of public and school authorities do exist in different countries and create challenges related to the successful implementation of

inclusion in practice and the creation of a common policy framework that can facilitate inclusive sport actions.

Despite differences existing among today's different societies concerning accommodation of participants with ID in physical activity, common inclusion strategies (Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2009; Kasser & Lytle, 2005; Sherrill, 2004; Davis, 2002) in sport and PE settings that can be proposed for participants with ID, are:

Table 5. Inclusion Strategies in Sport & PE Settings for Participants with ID

Inclusion Strategies for Athletes with ID
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare for inclusion starting from identifying and overcoming barriers to inclusive physical activity, that is:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set a positive learning environment in your local community and promote positive perceptions and attitudes through the creation of a positive social climate with meetings with fellow peer coaches in your region, children and young PWID and their families. In your attempt to create a strong supportive network, don't forget that many Special Olympic coaches especially those working with the Unified Sports program are most often PE teachers working in special schools that have decided to contribute.• Foster others to avoid labels and stereotyping language (e.g. handicapped, disabled person) during meetings, since the words used to define someone, influences how the person is perceived or treated and sets limitations. Instead, use positive language (e.g. people with and without disabilities) that emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual with ID and focuses on what participants with ID CAN do, not what they can't.• Change perceptions through increased knowledge and awareness and exposure to information with educational presentations and academic courses, internet resources, guest speakers with previous inclusion experience, collaborative training and meetings with other coaches and local representatives.• Overcome accessibility and equipment barriers by arranging meetings to gain administrative support, secure sponsorships and finance resources from local education, Municipality authorities, community resources and businesses and choosing more accessible location for sport activities.

- Set up a barrier free activity area and variety of equipment that sets up the conditions to invite everyone to participate.
- Plan for success by learning how to apply Individualized Education Programming (I.E.P) that sets the stage for successful inclusion, that is:
 - Learn about the components of the I.E.P form that will help you cope with the teaching of the athlete with intellectual disability you are responsible for instructing and supporting within your sport/PE environment.
 - Learn how to provide assessment and a clear description of the athlete's present level of performance with short-term, middle-term and long-term goals and objectives identified through I.E.P. use.
 - Learn how to develop a well-planned and organized adapted PE program and lesson planning by:
 - a) Selecting meaningful adaptations of exercise, teaching and environment that are in correspondence with the ability level of your athlete with ID and promote health, motivation, self-esteem and a sense of achievement.
 - b) Providing enjoyable activities that promote collaboration between learners and a positive emotional atmosphere that is free of stress and performance prerequisites or outcomes.
 - Write down any other important and potential resource of information ('significant others', including parents, social workers, classroom teachers, therapy specialists) who helped you during the whole I.E.P. process.
- Contact the nearest Special Olympics and/or Paralympics organization in your local region to initiate the process of becoming a Special Olympics or Paralympics coach, experience life-changing moments and get informed about all sports available and relative inclusion programs such as the Unified Sports Program of Special Olympics for athletes with and without ID.

In coaching terms, a coach who wants to possess the ability to positively guide together a group of athletes with and without ID having very different needs and performance levels, requires to take into account the most effective and widely used activity based model of Inclusion Spectrum (Black & Stevenson, 2012). The Inclusion Spectrum provides coaches with four delivery approaches ranging from fully open activities to separated participation along with a fifth disability sport activity approach

of ‘reverse integration’. All delivery approaches use the STEP tools referring to adaptations every time required in terms of Space, Task, Equipment and People.

In “open activities” such as cooperative or unstructured movement games or warm up and cool-down tasks, everyone can do the same with no adaptations or modifications to the equipment or environment.

“Modified activities” involve everyone doing the same game or activities, but the rules, area or equipment are adapted to promote inclusion.

In “parallel activity” approach although participants all play the same game, they do so by working in groups that have the same ability level and at their own pace.

“Separate activities” state that occasionally it is better for a person or a group of pupils with disability to prepare separately from other peers for a disability sport event.

The fifth disability sport activity approach refers to ‘reverse integration’, where people without disabilities are included in disability sports together with peers with ID and other disabilities, as in the case of Unified Sports Program of Special Olympics.

Figure 2. The Inclusion Spectrum (Black & Stevenson, 2012)

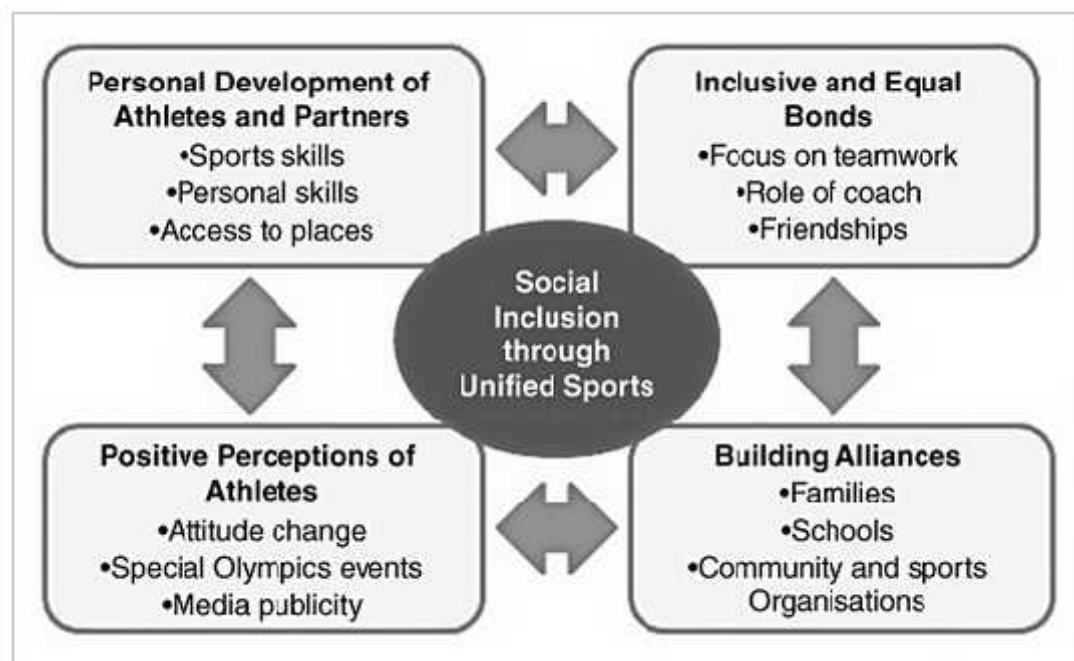


The Unified Sports program unites in the same sport teams, participants with ID (called athletes) with peers without intellectual disabilities (called partners) of

similar skill level for inclusion, training and competition purposes. The key issue of Unified sports is that all individuals with ID value in their social role to play within team sports, experience meaningful inclusion and participate in local community while developing their sporting skills.

The four main and common themes (McConkey et al., 2013, pp. 927) of coaches' perceptions related to the success of Unified sports emerged in terms of promoting social inclusion, can be summarized as follows:

Figure 3. Main themes to promote social inclusion with Unified Sports



Unified Sports program provides a unique shared experience for both athletes with ID and partners without ID and reshapes negative perceptions that surround ID in many countries more efficiently than national campaigns. Thus, all sport coaches should understand that their multifaceted role to facilitate team skills and social bonding outside playing field through Unified sports is of the most crucial importance in promoting equality of access and treatment for athletes and partners and the reality of social inclusion for athletes with ID in sports as well as policies and practices within communities and organizations that benefit all members of a community of all abilities.

The personal development of both athletes' and partners in terms of skills and equal access opportunities, the bonds developed between them based on respect and equality that each coach cultivates through teamwork and friendship growth, the

promotion of positive perceptions and negative attitudes change and building alliances and networks based on strong social ties between similar people are aims that all sport coaches of athletes with ID should seek to achieve in their communities by adopting some of the inclusion strategies and adaptations mentioned in this chapter.

In practical terms, each sport coach who wants to positively guide together a group of athletes with and without ID who have different needs and ability levels should learn how to connect the adaptations and inclusive sport strategies mentioned in this chapter, with the inclusion spectrum and STEP adaptation tools. The best way for a sport coach to learn how to connect these elements, is first to organize a local inclusive sport event to promote cooperation of participants/athletes with and without ID and increase social awareness.

Since organization of inclusion events differ not only from country to country but also from region to region, following are three real examples from the five countries involved in this TEAL UP program, of how to organize inclusive sport events at regional level of participants with and without ID. Each example presents a past inclusion event that was organized successfully with the participation of all relative education and disability sport associations involved, to make the link of adaptations, inclusion strategies and inclusion spectrum more comprehensible to sport coaches in terms of practical application.

“We All Play Bocce” – Greece

The inclusion event took place at the premises of the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science (DPESS), University of Thessaly, located in Trikala city. The event was a common effort organized by the undergraduate students and teacher of the adapted physical education specialty in cooperation with a graduate sport coach of the Department who was also an international referee of athletes with ID in Special Olympics, the primary and secondary school students and teachers of four (two general and two special) schools of the local region and the Municipality authorities of Trikala city.

The inclusion event that was set at 8th of May 2015, took four months to organize in terms of getting in touch with all parties involved (schools, local Municipality and education authorities, families of children) and require permission, and to find sponsorships from local businesses to purchase bocce balls via internet, create information material, buy orange juices and bottles of water for all children

with and without ID and advertise the event in local press. In return for funding, the names of businesses that contributed financially to the event were advertised on the relative poster created.

Two weeks prior to the event, there was a preparatory period in which the undergraduate students along with the sport coach visited each school separately to present bocce as a sport and to prepare through discussion all students (with and without ID) to meet each other. Students without ID were also informed about their assistive teammate role during the event, with brief information also provided about intellectual disability.

Overall, 120 participants of two equal groups of students with and without disabilities participated in the inclusive event. Upon arrival of each school at the DPESS premises, a juice and a bottle of water were provided to each child.

According to the inclusion spectrum, it was a “modified activity” involving everyone doing the same game, with slight modifications in terms of rules and equipment used to promote inclusion. Thus, according to STEP adaptation tools, “Space” and “People” remained the same and “Task” and “Equipment” were slightly modified when needed.

In particular, the bocce court remained the same in terms of its official dimensions, that is, 18.29 x 3,66m, with four bocce courts created with ground tape, whereas two sets of bocce balls and two sets of boccia balls were used. Boccia balls that are lighter and softer in texture, were used in the case students in wheelchair with ID who also have a physical disability and a small children’s slide was similarly used as a ramp when needed. Overall, the purpose was not to run a bocce tournament with its official rules as in Special Olympics but to use the sport of bocce as a mean to promote inclusion in local region. Most of the time, game rules were kept the same, but they were modified when necessary in terms of adding equipment (ramp and balls) of the boccia Paralympic sport to promote inclusion and ensure participation of students with ID and a physical disability.

The main event has started with a “parade” of all students with and without ID as happens in Special Olympics, and all students gave their “Special Olympics oath” (‘Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt’). Next, children were separated in teams with each bocce team including 4 ‘players’, 2 with and 2 without ID. All teams competed each other with double elimination used as a system (in two defeats each team was ‘eliminated’). In each bocce court, 2 sets of 4 chairs were

placed for each team of four students with and without ID competing. At the end of the inclusion event, all students received a certificate and a participation medal and dance followed for everyone involved in the project.

The time period following the inclusion event, the special secondary school team participated with their PE teacher as a sport coach to the National Special Olympics, they won the third and first place in two consecutive years and a school student became an athlete of the national bocce team. The inclusion bocce event with the addition of more sport activities was repeated locally, since it was a very positive experience for all students (with and without ID) and their PE teachers. Finally, the Municipality of Trikala acknowledged the whole effort and created within the special school a bocce court that is the only court ever created in a special school in Greece.

“Marathon, Half Marathon and Cross Aradulu” - Romania

General Info

The purpose of the event was to promote health education by encouraging running and it was co-organised by the Experienta Multisport club.

Races

The marathon, half marathon and road running of Arad included 5 races:

- Marathon – 42,195 km;
- Half-Marathon– 21,097 km;
- Marathon-Relay– 42,195 km;
- 6 km Race;
- 1 km race.

Special prizes were awarded to:

- Tutors: the first three people (teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.) according to the total number of kilometres run by competitors who have registered them as tutors; the first three people (teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.) according to the total number of competitors who have registered them as tutors;

- Educational institutions represented at the event: the first three educational institutions with the highest number of kilometres run by their represented competitors; the first three educational institutions with the highest number of represented runners;

- Represented stakeholders of the event (companies/ associations/ institutions/clubs): the first three stakeholders with the highest number of kilometres run by their represented competitors; the first three stakeholders with the highest number of represented runners.

Awards for identity

Within the event, there were awarded the most ingenious runners in terms of race suits used. The list of identities that can be taken: superhero, story character, cartoon character, animal, Indian, Dacian, Roman, soldier, duke, duchess, pilot, captainship, fruit, etc.

Key figures

The runners present on June 6, 2015, came from 18 countries: Romania, Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Moldova, Poland, Canada, Serbia, Hungary, USA, Slovakia, Netherlands, Great Britain, Czech Republic, Austria, Turkey and Japan.

The year 2015 had the following other key figures:

- Total runners: 2587;
- Group runs associated with the event, for training, weekly;
- 158 partners of the event;
- 345 volunteers involved;
- 10 months for preparation, development and evaluation;
- One special inclusive, dedicated race;
- Of the 2587 runners in 1872, they were from the city of Arad (1.18% of the population of Arad);

The event Marathon, Half Marathon and Cross Aradulu allowed achieving one of the objectives for 3 years of the Multisport Experience team: at least 1% (1591 people) of the population of Arad to participate in an event dedicated to running. On June 6, 2015, 1872 inhabitants of Arad participated (1.18 of Arad population).

Costume Parade including people with various disabilities

At the 1 km race, the event had a special start integrated - the costume parade - in the opening of the street theatre "STORIES AND DREAMS", organized by Integra Association. More than 100 children participated in the race, in a proper preparation done by teachers, social workers and coaches.

The preparation steps included:

- Partnership prepared, establishing the details of the special participation and support;
- Special measures to be prepared;
- Getting local approvals from authorities to organise the event with this specific race included;
- Getting the proper consent from legal representatives;
- Training;
- Enrolments in the large event;
- Route details preparation;
- Communication;
- Day preparation;
- Rehearsal;
- Day event;
- Evaluation.

Special measures in place

In terms of specific preparation, since the small race of 1 km was not a competitive one, participants could run together in ‘waves’, in a few starts organized to avoid accidents.

People with disabilities could have accompanying persons to support them during the race participation.

An adequate time limit of 20 minutes/1 km was, also, established in a way to allow participants to even walk, again, to be as inclusive as possible and to avoid injuries. All participants finishing -sooner or later- the race, received participation certificates and medals.

“Inclusive Rugby Training” – Spain

Differences from conventional training approaches and applications to other sports

In this post we are going to talk about inclusive training. First, we will describe the actors involved and their roles in the training sessions. Then we will present an overall description of our training methodology, the guided discovery learning, and the general structure of our trainings. Finally, we will present two samples of trainings sessions, one for rugby and one for basketball.

Actors and roles in the training sessions

Coach is responsible for defining the annual game plan and structuring the training sessions. They hold the leading position in the team and help the players and the facilitators to achieve the objectives of the team.

Facilitators are an extension of the coach and their role is to provide specific advice to the players. During training sessions, they engage with players in smaller groups and provide individual indications aimed to develop each players potential.

Players are the main actors in the training sessions. Training sessions purpose is to teach players a set of skills related to a specific sport. The coach and the facilitators should always consider the individual skills of each player and adapt the teaching approach to them.

Guided discovery learning

Guided discovery learning is an integral part of our philosophy. We believe that guided discovery allows players to freely experience different options while receiving little tips aimed to help them achieve specific goals that have been set in advance. These goals may be technical skills (e.g. pass, hit, etc.) or tactical skills (e.g. 2v1).

Our methodology differs from other conventional sports approaches, such as direct command or task assignment, in the fact that we encourage the players to actively participate in discovering and learning new skills. We decided to pursue the guided discovery methodology because it suits our singular training dynamics in which facilitators play a key role.

Indeed, before each training, the facilitators meet with the coach to establish the guidelines that will help the players achieve the specific goals set for the training session. During practice, the facilitators engage with the players as teammates although they possess background knowledge of the sport.

Structure of the training sessions

The training sessions start with warm-up exercises that prepare the players for the practice. During the warm-up, the players and the facilitators already start to interact as a group by engaging in activities that resemble a slower version of the sport they are about to play.

The main part of the training starts after the warm-up. The players are posed a challenge and a question that they will need to discover during the training. Then the players are divided into smaller groups which will always include at least one facilitator.

During the main part of the training, the players learn more about the challenge and the questions while performing various exercises and activities. These activities are led by the facilitators who will help the players discover the right answer by providing small indications. The last activity is always a fun game aimed to encourage the players to apply the newly learned skills.

In the last part of the training, the players share their own solutions and answers to the challenges and questions they were posed at the beginning. These are shared and discussed with all the team. Finally, the coach and the facilitators provide positive feedback by emphasizing on the whys for the right answer.

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