

Specific Game Abilities and their Significance for Determining the Prospects of Youth National Basketball Team Players

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Abstract The study aimed to identify the components of the manifestation of specific game abilities in basketball athletes and substantiate their significance in determining the prospects of junior national team players. The research was conducted based on the training of junior (U16) national basketball teams of Ukraine (n=68) during 2020-2022. Experts consider the most important game abilities for junior national basketball team players to include: 1) game intelligence (IQ) – 8.41±0.79 points; 2) game versatility – 7.25±1.65 points; 3) work ethic and the desire for constant improvement – 5.83±2.20 points; 4) speed of mastering new material – 5.66±1.61 points; 5) leadership qualities and influence on the team's play – 5.58±1.97 points. According to coaches, less significance during this stage of selection is given to: effectiveness of play under opponent pressure – 2.01±1.97 points and rebounding – 2.16±1.11 points. Statistically significant correlations were identified between the level of basketball players' leadership qualities and the number of minutes they played

on the court in official games (r=0.517). The effectiveness of play under opponent pressure, in our studies, showed a statistically significant correlation with the manifestation of leadership qualities and influence on the team's play (r = 0.870, p<0.01). The final decision on determining the strategic prospects of junior national basketball team players should be made based on a comprehensive consideration of the manifestation of various components in the structure of each player's preparedness. During the selection of players at this stage of preparation, it is crucial to consider specific game abilities that do not have objective-metric units of measurement and characterize the athlete's inclination for further effective improvement in the specific conditions of polycomponent competitive activity.

Keywords Game Abilities, Sports Games, Basketball, Competitive Activity, Game Roles

1. Introduction

The rapid development of achievements in global sports demands the continuous search for effective means and methods of preparation, refining the technology of sports reserve training at all stages of long-term improvement [1, 2]. The preparation of sports reserves is a long-term and complex process. Its effectiveness depends on the successful implementation and consistency of solving strategic tasks at each stage of long-term training. Scientists from leading countries worldwide conduct research aimed at scientifically substantiating and further refining the system of athlete preparation in youth sports [3, 4, 5].

The multi-year process of athlete preparation and its stages should be oriented towards solving strategic tasks related to the search and rational preparation of prospective athletes. Such an approach creates the necessary conditions for systematic, planned preparation of both distant and immediate sports reserves, ensuring effective resolution of specific tasks that are age-appropriate and consistent with the mastery formation laws at each stage of long-term improvement [6, 7].

Team sports have a complex structure of competitive activity. The individual actions of each player must organically fit into the overall team strategy, and be subordinated to solving group and team tactical tasks in defense and attack. Players must instantly react to the options of play proposed by the opponent and make adequate decisions [8, 9, 10, 11]. The fast-paced nature of the game, and the constant change of situations on the field, require athletes to display highly specialized intellectual and creative abilities, which determine the athlete's suitability for specific game activities and are difficult to subject to objective-metric research [12, 13, 14].

According to coaches, it is precisely the level of manifestation of specific game abilities that distinguishes basketball players and becomes the key factor determining the prospects of entering high-achievement sports.

Experts identify problems in the modern system of selection in sports games [15, 16]. Most criteria and indicators used to determine sports talent in childhood and adolescence have a general direction and low informativeness for diagnosing the game skills of basketball players. In adolescence, specific game abilities become significant, and their metrological measurement becomes complex. The detachment of theoretical knowledge from specific training activities and the abstract form of methodological recommendations presented in the scientific-methodological literature, in our opinion, create a significant gap between theory and practice.

An analysis of normative-methodological documents on basketball showed that the tests and criteria proposed in them do not reflect the game potential of athletes [17]. The vast majority of traditional tests and criteria for assessing the level of athletes' preparedness in team sports have a supplementary character. The discrepancy between the

results of performance standards and the level of special abilities of young basketball players poses a dilemma for the coach in balancing formal and real approaches to retaining prospective players.

Experts identify problems with the current selection system in sports games. Most criteria and indicators used to determine sports talent in children and youth are generally oriented and provide low informativeness for diagnosing basketball players' game mastery. In adolescence, specific game abilities become significant, and their metrological measurement presents difficulties. The detachment of theoretical knowledge from specific training activities and the abstract form of methodological recommendations, as presented in scientific and methodological literature, in our view, create a significant gap between theory and practice. An analysis of normative-methodological documents in basketball showed that the tests and criteria proposed do not reflect the athletes' game potential. The vast majority of traditional tests and criteria for assessing athletes' readiness level in team sports are auxiliary. The discrepancy between the results of control standards and the level of special abilities manifestation in young basketball players poses a dilemma for the coach between formal and real approaches to retaining prospective players [18].

For the manifestation of specific game skills, an athlete needs to perform basketball actions while simultaneously solving tasks of tactical interaction with team partners under the active opposition of the opponent. This complicates the procedure of their objective measurement. The statistics of competitive activity indicators from official game protocols (number of rebounds, interceptions, points scored in a match, shooting percentage, etc.) only reflect the final actions of basketball players during the team's complex interactions on the court and also cannot reveal the full spectrum of athletes' actions during a match [19].

A player needs to make rational tactical decisions in the process of various, unpredictable game situations, timely perform individual and group movements and interactions aimed at preparing for final attacking or defensive functions (spacing, timing, etc.). These abilities determine a basketball player's game talent, and his prospects for reaching a higher level of sports achievement [7, 20]. The complexity of the competitive activity structure in basketball and the influence of various factors on the effectiveness of competitive struggle on the court suggest the multi-component nature of specific game abilities themselves. Identifying its key components is one of the pressing tasks in research on team sports, particularly in basketball.

1.1. The Aim

The aim of the research is to identify the components of the manifestation of specific game abilities in athletes in basketball and to substantiate their significance for

determining the prospects of youth national team players.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The research involved youth (U16) national basketball teams of Ukraine during the period from 2020 to 2022. Individual data of 68 male basketball players - candidates for the youth national team's main lineup were analyzed.

Experts: Coaches of the Ukrainian national teams U14 – U20, scientific-pedagogical staff of higher education institutions, and specialists in athlete training in team sports comprised 24 individuals.

2.2. Research Methods

The study utilized methods of theoretical analysis, pedagogical observation, pedagogical testing with instrumental methods, analysis of competitive activity, and expert surveys.

To assess the level of general and specific physical preparedness, the following tests were utilized:

1. Yo-Yo Intermittent Recovery Test Level 1, meters;
2. Line Agility Test, seconds;
3. Reactive Shuttle Test, seconds;
4. Standing Long Jump, cm;
5. Shuttle Run 3x40 m, seconds;
6. Octagon Test, seconds;
7. Sprint $\frac{3}{4}$ Court, seconds;
8. Push-Ups in 30 seconds;
9. Sit-Ups in 30 seconds from a seated floor position.

To determine the effectiveness of the competitive activity of youth national basketball team players, their performance in YEBL matches was analyzed using traditional parameters of the standard FIBA match protocol: field goals – attempts, made, shooting percentage; two-point field goals – attempts, made, shooting percentage; three-point field goals – attempts, made, shooting percentage; free throws – attempts, made, shooting percentage; defensive and offensive rebounds; steals; turnovers; assists; personal fouls; blocked shots; points scored in the match. The statistical analysis of data included verification of the observed data for normal distribution, using the Shapiro-Wilk test. If the indicators of basketball players in their role were normally distributed (such as body weight of athletes), the equality of variances of characteristics in comparison groups was assessed by the Levene's test and, since the conditions were met, comparative analysis of the indicators.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

Within the study, an expert survey was conducted to assess the significance of specific gaming abilities among

youth basketball team players, involving 24 experts. Experts' ratings were analyzed using the following statistical methods:

To assess the agreement among experts, the concordance coefficient W was utilized. This allowed evaluating the consensus level among experts regarding the assessments of specific gaming abilities. A high coefficient $W=0.67$ indicated significant agreement in ratings, supported by a statistically significant level of $p=0.0008$.

Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between various game abilities and performance outcomes. High correlation coefficients, such as $r = 0.901$ for the relationship between game intelligence and the speed of mastering new material, and $r = 0.870$ for the effectiveness of play under opponent pressure and leadership qualities, indicate strong positive relationships. These correlations were found to be statistically significant with p -values less than 0.001 and 0.01, respectively, confirming that these associations are not merely coincidental.

In the case when the indicators did not meet the necessary conditions for using the one-way ANOVA, its non-parametric analogue was used, namely the Kruskal-Wallis H test. Post hoc comparisons were performed with the help of the Mann-Whitney U test [21, 22].

The level of statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. For very low p -values ($<1.0 \cdot 10^{-6}$), the results were presented as $p < 0.01$, indicating high statistical significance.

Statistical processing of empirical data was implemented using the statistical analysis package STATISTICA 10.0 (StatSoft, USA).

2.4. Ethical Approval

This work is carried out within the framework of the Consolidated Plan of Scientific Research on the topic "Improving preparation for the main competitions of the macrocycle of Ukraine's national teams in sports games" (State registration number 0121U108185). The research was carried out according to the ethical standards of the Act of Ukraine "On Higher Education" No. 1556-VII dated 01.07.2014 and the Letter from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On the Academic Plagiarism Prevention" No. 1/11-8681 dated 15.08.2018. Informed consent was received from all individuals who took part in this research and who could refuse participation at any time.

3. Results

The expert survey identified the structural components of specific game abilities in basketball (Table 1), including technical-tactical, motivational-personal, and intellectual-creative abilities of a player. The assessment of specific game abilities should be conducted within a clearly defined structure with internal differentiation.

Table 1. Structure of the athlete's game readiness diagnostics (subjective assessment)

Technical-tactical component (qualitative parameters)	Motivational-personality component	Intellectual-creative component
<i>Shooting proficiency, c.u.</i>	<i>Ability to play under opponent pressure, c.u.</i>	<i>Speed of mastering new material, c.u.</i>
<i>Defensive play efficiency, c.u.</i>	<i>Resilience in critical game phases, c.u.</i>	<i>Game intelligence (IQ), c.u.</i>
<i>Success in rebounding effort, c.u.</i>	<i>Work ethic and desire for improvement, c.u.</i>	<i>Game versatility, c.u.</i>
<i>Efficiency of off-ball movements, c.u.</i>	<i>Ability to take initiative and lead the team, c.u.</i>	<i>Creative game skills, c.u.</i>
Prospects for entering high achievement sports, c.u. (conditional units)		

The motivational-personal component of game preparedness involves the manifestation of important psychological qualities in real-game conditions, especially during the resolution of complex tasks in critical segments of the match.

Intellectual-creative abilities characterize a player's ability for creative interpretation of game episodes and making unconventional, effective decisions under complex game conditions, etc. The analysis of the level of game abilities can be carried out both for individual components of preparedness and as a whole. Their evaluation is possible only in conditional units and depends on the level of expertise and experience of the professionals involved in the expertise.

Our survey revealed that experts consider the following as the most important game abilities for youth national basketball team players: 1) game intelligence (IQ) – 8.41 ± 0.79 points; 2) game versatility – 7.25 ± 1.65 points; 3) work ethic and desire for continuous improvement – 5.83 ± 2.20 points; 4) speed of learning new material – 5.66 ± 1.61 points; 5) leadership qualities and impact on the team's game – 5.58 ± 1.97 points (Figure 1).

Experts believe intellectual game abilities (game IQ) are the most crucial specific abilities for basketball players. This includes a player's ability to quickly analyze the constantly changing situation on the court, make adequate and rapid decisions, plan and execute multi-move combinations and interactions during team defense and attack, choose advantageous positions on the court in various game situations proactively, and the ability to disguise game intentions against the opponent. According to coaches, less significant during this selection phase are: effectiveness under opponent pressure – 2.01 ± 1.97 points and rebounding – 2.16 ± 1.11 points. The effectiveness of playing under opponent pressure has high variability among different players and strongly depends on psychological resilience and experience. Young players can learn to better handle opponent pressure as they advance in their athletic skills, whereas intellectual abilities are more stable indicators that manifest at earlier stages. Rebounding often depends on physical attributes and specific skills that develop over time through training. At

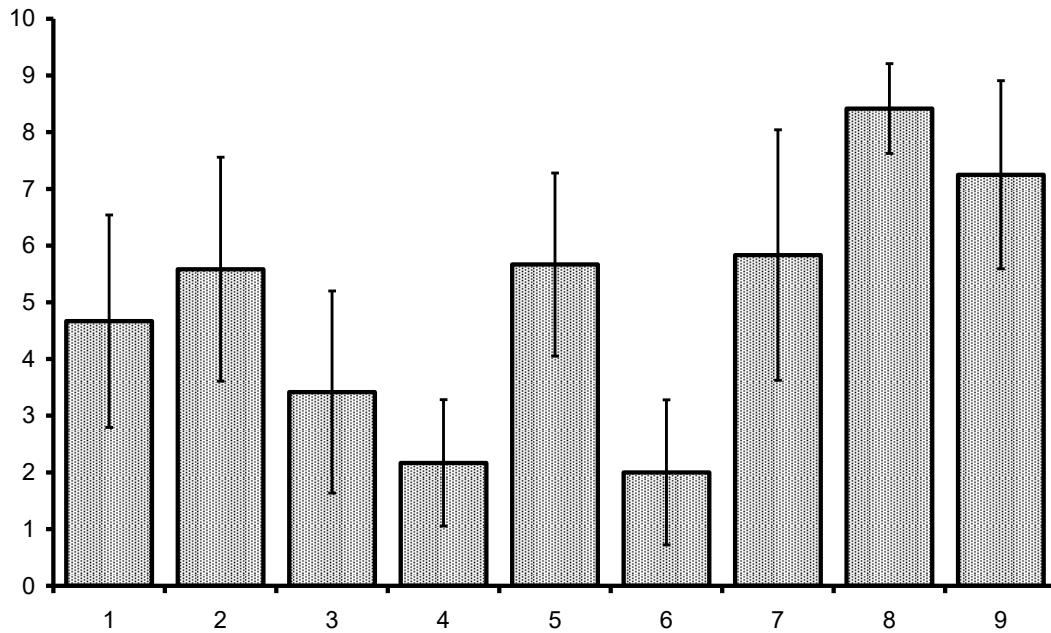
the selection stage for youth national teams, coaches focus more on general cognitive and tactical skills rather than specialized physical abilities, which can be improved through targeted training.

Experts believe a basketball player's ability to perform under opponent pressure largely depends on adequate competitive experience and a rationally structured training process. Young basketball players' problems under aggressive defense by the opponent result from mistakes in the training process and the quality of game time in previous competitions (quality of opposing teams). A basketball player accustomed to playing under less pressure from an active defense in youth sports finds it challenging to compete in a more competitive environment.

It can be assumed that if such shortcomings in the training process are eliminated, there is a high probability of increasing the level of manifestation of this game quality. The least variability of data was observed for the level of manifestation of the specific quality of game intelligence. In fact, according to experts, six specific game qualities should be considered during the selection at this stage of preparation. Cases where an athlete exhibits a high level of all specific abilities simultaneously are rare in practice. More commonly, an athlete shows a high manifestation of some abilities while lacking or being average in others.

Research has established that high-class athletes have a unique individual structure and do not match average statistical model characteristics. In such cases, there is a valid discussion about which abilities should be prioritized during the selection of basketball players at the youth level. After all, it is not definitively known which particular combination of significant individual qualities will lead to accomplishing the strategic task of reaching a high level of achievement in sports.

For the expertise conducted in our research, five experts who worked continuously with a certain category of the national team and had the opportunity to observe the players for an extended period were involved. Experts were asked to rate the level of manifestation of each specific game quality on a ten-point scale, where the highest level of manifestation was rated with the maximum score, and a low level – with the minimum (Table 2).



1. Shooting proficiency, c.u. (conditional units). 2. Leadership qualities and impact on team play, c.u. 3. Defensive play efficiency, c.u. 4. Rebounding effort, c.u. 5. Speed of mastering new play concepts, c.u. 6. Effectiveness under opponent pressure, c.u. 7. Work ethic and desire for continuous improvement, c.u. 8. Game IQ (game intelligence), c.u. 9. Game versatility, c.u.

Figure 1. The significance of specific abilities for selecting young national team basketball players (according to experts, n = 24)

Table 2. Expert evaluation of specific game abilities of the center player of the youth national team of Ukraine (10 is the highest score, 1 is the lowest)

Specific game abilities	Concordance Coefficient $W=0.67$; $df=8$; $p=0.0008$					X	SD	V, %
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5			
Shooting proficiency, c.u.	8	7	7	8	7	7.40	0.55	7.40
Leadership qualities and impact on team play, c.u.	5	4	3	4	5	4.20	0.84	19.92
Defensive play efficiency, c.u.	7	5	7	8	6	6.60	1.14	17.28
Rebounding, c.u.	8	7	8	7	9	7.80	0.84	10.73
Speed of mastering new play concepts, c.u.	6	8	7	7	7	7.00	0.71	10.10
Effectiveness under opponent pressure, c.u.	6	6	7	7	7	6.60	0.55	8.30
Work ethic and desire for continuous improvement, c.u.	6	7	8	7	8	7.20	0.84	11.62
Game intelligence (game IQ), c.u.	6	7	7	8	6	6.80	0.84	12.30
Game versatility, c.u.	4	5	6	4	5	4.80	0.84	17.43
X	6.22	6.22	6.67	6.67	6.67			
SD	1.30	1.30	1.50	1.58	1.32			
V, %	20.92	20.92	22.50	23.72	19.84			

Conducting further statistical calculations allows determining the degree of agreement among experts' opinions and identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the individual structure of each player's preparedness. The average statistical rating scores from the experts for each game indicator were used by us in further research aimed at determining their interrelation with other preparedness parameters (competition data, physical preparedness, etc.). Our study revealed the presence of correlational relationships between the level of game intelligence of young basketball players and their speed of mastering new program material – $r = 0.901$, $p < 0.001$. In this case, we observe the complex nature of athletes' specific intellectual abilities, one of the manifestations of which is the speed of learning new technical-tactical material and the versatility of game actions.

Other aspects of game intelligence can include the ability to anticipate (predict) game actions, solve complex game situations on the court in an unconventional way, and

quickly evaluate the situation in the game, etc. At the same time, there was no statistically significant relationship between game intelligence (IQ) and the desire to play in defense. We hypothesized that players with greater intellectual abilities try to achieve results by quickly understanding the actions of the opponent and team partners.

A statistically significant relationship is observed between the effectiveness of playing under opponent pressure and the manifestation of leadership qualities and impact on the team's play ($r = 0.870$, $p < 0.01$). Significant internal connections ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$) were observed at the level of manifestation of other components of specific game preparedness.

Statistically significant relationships were found between the level of manifestation of leadership qualities in basketball players and the number of minutes they played on the court in official games ($r = 0.517$) (Table 3).

Table 3. The relationship between the level of manifestation of specific game abilities of basketball players and the effectiveness of their competitive activity in official YEBL matches (n = 28)

Technical-tactical actions	Specific game skills (expert evaluation)								
	1*	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Playing time, min	0.589	0.517	0.418	0.080	0.465	0.393	0.186	0.356	0.308
Field goals, made	0.191	0.164	0.246	0.550	0.117	0.185	-0.119	-0.044	-0.026
Field goals, attempts	0.464	0.311	0.351	0.270	0.271	0.306	0.047	0.148	0.159
Field goal percentage, %	-0.149	-0.252	-0.283	0.667	-0.080	-0.272	-0.216	-0.126	-0.315
2-point shots, made	0.023	-0.011	0.049	0.610	-0.069	-0.023	-0.201	-0.187	-0.086
2-point shots, attempts	0.183	0.089	0.156	0.478	0.040	0.104	-0.126	-0.092	0.053
2-point shot percentage, %	-0.001	-0.215	-0.315	0.514	-0.039	-0.336	-0.027	0.026	-0.158
3-point shots, made	0.557	0.583	0.716	0.065	0.663	0.732	0.250	0.454	0.206
3-point shots, attempts	0.816	0.624	0.574	-0.377	0.619	0.570	0.411	0.598	0.298
3-point shot percentage, %	0.355	0.295	0.537	0.112	0.381	0.479	-0.217	0.194	0.214
Free throws, made	0.479	0.160	0.310	0.319	0.454	0.190	0.016	0.254	0.253
Free throws, attempts	0.473	0.161	0.204	0.135	0.349	0.132	0.006	0.159	0.096
Free throw percentage, %	0.450	0.088	0.126	0.275	0.346	0.030	-0.217	0.285	0.178
Offensive rebounds	0.006	-0.124	0.203	0.710	-0.001	0.064	-0.166	-0.128	0.075
Defensive rebounds	0.222	0.056	-0.122	0.386	0.074	-0.111	0.010	0.116	0.393
Total rebounds	0.148	-0.024	-0.006	0.566	0.049	-0.056	-0.067	0.022	0.294
Steals	0.404	0.667	0.439	0.204	0.364	0.544	0.159	0.267	0.080
Personal fouls	0.594	0.288	0.278	0.105	0.409	0.334	0.255	0.314	0.383
Turnovers	0.547	0.459	0.017	-0.397	0.106	0.123	0.252	0.332	0.334
Steals	0.144	0.347	0.367	0.452	0.171	0.366	-0.095	-0.061	-0.158
Block shots	0.061	-0.168	0.009	0.622	0.143	-0.047	-0.104	0.025	0.289
Efficiency (EFF)	-0.063	0.027	0.170	0.837	0.081	0.131	-0.155	-0.098	0.001
Points scored in the game	0.303	0.219	0.324	0.493	0.260	0.256	-0.058	0.072	0.055

Note: 1. Shooting proficiency, c.u. 2. Leadership qualities and impact on team play, c.u. 3. Defensive play efficiency, c.u. 4. Rebounding effort, c.u. 5. Speed of mastering new play concepts, c.u. 6. Effectiveness under opponent pressure, c.u. 7. Work ethic and desire for continuous improvement, c.u. 8. Game IQ (game intelligence), c.u. 9. Game versatility, c.u.

It can be stated that even at this age, coaches prefer in the game those athletes who can take the initiative and influence the course of the match. The competitive activity of young athletes is characterized by high instability and variability.

A similar trend was observed in tests assessing the level of speed and coordination abilities of young basketball players (Sprint $\frac{3}{4}$, Line Agility, Reactive Shuttle). Basketball players who scored the highest in "rebounding effort effectiveness" showed better results in jump tests ($r=0.525$).

A specific quality, such as player versatility, practically had no statistically significant correlations with the level of motor skills manifestation. The relationship of athletes' game versatility was observed only with the results of the Yo-Yo RL1 test ($r=0.529$).

4. Discussion

Kalen et al. [23], and Yixiong et al. [24], in their studies, highlight the rational composition of youth national team squads and player selection as the main task in preparing the next generation of athletes in team sports. The orientation of athletes with the appropriate aptitudes and abilities should be carried out from the first stages of preparing cadet national teams. The current implementation of auxiliary tasks related to the success in youth international competitions should not disrupt the strategic balance between biologically mature basketball players in the youth age group and players who can show their potential in older age groups and have real chances to enter professional basketball.

Ostojic et al. [25], note that in adolescence, specific game abilities of basketball players begin to manifest, which affect further sports improvement and a successful career in high achievement sports.

Bonal et al. [26], and Jeličić et al. [27], emphasize the importance of anthropometric data and the ability to make timely correct game decisions for further success in basketball.

The game talent of basketball players requires specialized assessment by professionals with an appropriate level of professional competence. There are no justified alternative methods for determining these specific game abilities at the current stage.

Criteria and standards recommended in official regulatory documents aimed at determining the level of general physical and technical readiness do not cover significant components of a basketball player's game readiness. Existing approaches used in determining a player's talent play a more auxiliary role in revealing game capabilities. An insufficient level of physical and technical readiness can be compensated for; they are subject to significant correction and influence. The lack of game intelligence and specific basketball skills is practically impossible to compensate for. It is on the diagnostics of

these game abilities that professionals need to focus on in order to carry out quality selection and search for talented young athletes.

Our research is based on the necessity of comprehensively considering both subjective and measurable (metric) indicators, which will minimize the likelihood of coaching errors and increase the accuracy of long-term player potential predictions. We have demonstrated in the article the necessity of using subjective assessments of game abilities (which are not currently used) alongside traditional metric measurements and testing. The game process in basketball includes a number of complex and dynamic characteristics and indicators that are difficult to fully measure using standardized tests. For instance, decision-making speed, the ability to play creatively, and adaptation to unpredictable situations - these indicators are more effectively assessed through observation and expert evaluation than through metrics. Subjective evaluation better reflects a player's ability to adapt to stressful game conditions. The ability to maintain high performance during critical moments of the match, remain calm under pressure, and interact effectively with teammates - these indicators are difficult to measure with standard tests, but they are significant for the success of the player and the team. Subjective evaluation allows coaches to assess how well a player integrates technical skills with a tactical understanding of the game. The ability to make decisions under pressure, sense positioning on the court, and interact with other players - these indicators are challenging to evaluate exclusively through standardized tests. Additionally, each player is unique, and standardized metrics do not always account for individual differences. Subjective evaluation enables coaches to consider factors such as leadership qualities, motivation, and work ethic, which significantly impact a player's overall performance. Subjective evaluation, conducted by experienced coaches, provides more accurate long-term forecasting of a player's potential. Coaches can identify qualities that have not yet fully manifested but have significant potential for development. Therefore, the integration of subjective evaluation with traditional metrics allows for a comprehensive assessment of players' abilities and potential, minimizes the likelihood of coaching errors, and enhances the effectiveness of selecting promising basketball players.

One of the main problems in assessing the specific game abilities of basketball players is the determination of the algorithm and technology for conducting the expertise itself [17]. The results of composing test tasks and other measurements allow obtaining objective figures that are not dependent on the possible biased influence of interested parties.

The process of subjective assessment of game abilities is complicated by the fact that it is impossible to involve a large number of professionals in the expert survey. To improve the quality of expert assessment of basketball players, it is important to ensure the fulfillment of a number

of methodological conditions, among which are:

Conducting expert assessments by experienced professionals who have worked with youth for a long time, coaches with experience working with high-qualification teams, and knowledge of the requirements of high-achievement sports.

There is sufficient time for pedagogical observation to identify specific game talents, study individual characteristics, dynamics of changes in individual indicators, and analyze behavior in various situations and competitive conditions.

Impartiality of coach expertise. Coaches involved in assessing the specific capabilities of basketball players should not be able to influence the results of the young players' final assessment.

Expert assessment of a basketball player's game talent should serve as the main criterion for forming youth national teams.

This statement is debatable and requires further scientific discussion. Results, such as the execution of a long jump or the speed of running a 20-meter segment, have an indirect impact on a basketball player's competitive activity and prospects. This opinion is confirmed by our data.

Statistically significant correlations between the studied indicators were practically absent. Statistically significant connections were observed in speed-strength tests. This indicates the influence of the temporary advantages of a certain group of basketball players who had accelerated rates of biological development and showed better results in tests and during performances at youth competitions.

The results of the correlation analysis of the effectiveness indicators of competitive activity in youth competitions with the subjective expert assessment of basketball players' long-term prospects suggest that the effectiveness of competitive activity in youth cannot be a reliable criterion for predicting a young athlete's prospects for entering high achievement sports. The correlation between the two studied indicators was $-r = 0.112$.

Negative correlations were observed between the results of the majority of tests and the indicator of prospects for entering high achievement sports. This is likely due to differences in the rates of biological development among basketball players in cadet national teams.

This creates a paradoxical situation where the only objective indicators of competitive activity and testing results for physical and technical abilities, which can be used for selection at this age, do not show the true game talent of young basketball players but rather temporary advantages of more biologically mature children in each age category. If selection is primarily based on the results of objective-metric studies, it is necessary to choose accelerations because they will have the best indicators in many types of test tasks and during competitive activity.

It's hard to disagree with scientists [28, 29], who

highlight the importance of interpreting data on physical preparedness and competitive performance indicators of basketball players in youth age categories. In our view, it's more practical to use the characteristics of these indicators to determine the individual structure of a young basketball player's preparedness and the dynamics of changes in the studied parameters over the course of long-term training, to develop individual programs for improving weaknesses and enhancing strengths of each athlete's preparedness, etc.

Likewise, it's hard to disagree with Matveyev [30], who points out that an important issue under such conditions is determining the priority contribution of various preparedness components during selection and determining athletes' prospects. Decisions regarding a player's prospects should be made based on a comprehensive assessment of his various capabilities (physical, technical, game-related, psychological, etc.). However, the difficulty lies in the fact that it is unclear which of the mentioned factors should be prioritized when making the final decision.

The gap between theory and practice in basketball remains a contentious issue that affects strategic player selection. This can be explained, firstly, by the mismatch between theoretical models and real game conditions. Typically, theoretical models for player preparation and selection are based on idealized conditions that do not always reflect real on-court situations. Game scenarios modeled in training may be simplified and may not account for stress factors, decision-making speed, and interaction with other players in real competition conditions. A number of described theoretical approaches and methods do not undergo sufficient testing in real competition conditions. This leads to incorrect conclusions about the effectiveness of training programs or player selection criteria, as these methods may not account for all variables that affect game performance. Theoretical approaches mostly propose universal solutions that do not consider individual differences among players. Standardized tests may not take into account unique combinations of skills and psychological qualities that indicate a player's individuality. As a result, talented players may go unnoticed because they do not meet theoretical standards. The lack of feedback from real game situations usually leads to a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Players who perform well in training tasks may not demonstrate the same effectiveness during competitions, where additional stress factors and unpredictability are present. The implementation of new theoretical knowledge into practice often meets resistance from coaches and players due to habits, established preparation methods, and a lack of confidence in new approaches. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, it is necessary to integrate practical experience with theoretical knowledge, ensure feedback between training programs and real game situations, and adapt approaches to the individual needs and characteristics of players.

5. Conclusions

The dependency of sports results in basketball on the action of many factors necessitates the consideration of components of the individual structure of athletes' readiness from the stage of specialized basic training. A significant flaw in the selection criteria for basketball players at the children's and youth age, used at the current stage, is the lack of consideration for the specific game abilities of athletes, which cannot be objectively assessed with metric units of measurement.

Key components of the structure of specific game abilities in basketball include: shooting proficiency; leadership qualities and impact on the team's game; efficiency in defense; rebounding effort; speed of mastering new game material; effectiveness under opponent pressure; work ethic and desire for continuous improvement; game intelligence (game IQ); and player versatility.

Determining specific game abilities requires consideration of the proposed methodological positions, competent, and unbiased assessment of those talents and abilities of young athletes, which are exclusively manifested in competitive activity or conditions as close as possible to it.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors state no conflict of interest.

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