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Traian Constantinescu, iconic coach for basketball in Oradea

Ștefan MAROTI^{1*}, Ildikó MANASSES²

1. University of Oradea, Department of Physical Education Sport and Physical Therapy, 1 University st., 410087 Oradea, Romania, e-mail: marotistefan@yahoo.com

2. Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, 7 Pandurilor st., 400174, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, e-mail: ildi.manasses@gmail.com

* *Corresponding author*

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Abstract. This paper work belongs to a cycle of articles which have as purpose to bring to the sport lovers' attention a number of coaches, teachers, sportive, sports managers from Oradea who have obtained remarkable results on national and international level. After the introductory part, which refers to the motivation of the endeavor and importance of the paper work, it is presented coach Traian Constantinescu's activity during the first years when, under his guidance, the female basketball team Crișul Oradea achieved their most valuable performances. A special place is granted to the years when Baschet Club ICIM Arad team, coached by Traian Constantinescu, won two national champion titles at seniors, participated to the Liliana Ronchetti Cup and European Champion Clubs Cup. There are also presented the results of Romania's national teams which he trained and guided to the Balkan Championships, European Championships and University World Games. In the end, the article contains the enumeration of the distinction which were awarded to him as acknowledgement of his professional value and as appreciation of his merits.

Keywords: Sport history, personalities, basketball, Oradea

Introduction

Female basketball has a special place in the history of sports from Oradea. By the affinity of the people from Oradea, by the obtained results, it is one of the sports games highly favored by the city's inhabitants. The performances achieved by the team from Oradea rewarded the love and support the received. Achieving those performances was possible due to the fact that the basketball teams benefited, along the years, by the succession of generations of remarkable players who had a major

contribution to the accomplishments of this sports branch. At the same time, during the years, the history of female basketball in Oradea was marked by a series of coaches who, by the way they did their job, take up a special place in the memory of those who love this sport in our city.

We consider that the elaboration of an article which should recompose and bring to attention Traian Constantinescu's activity, one of the most valuable coaches who activated in sports in Oradea, contributes to the promotion of basketball in our city, to the dissemination of certain information related to this specialist's personality, who served this sports branch with passion, faith and obtained remarkable results.

First years of activity

Traian Constantinescu (figure 3), ever since he attended secondary school, was attracted by physical exercises. When he was a student of an educational institution from Bucharest with old and valuable sports traditions, Spiru Haret High School, he practiced several sports, especially volleyball and basketball (***, 1990). During 1949 and 1952, he activated within certain sports structures in Valea Jiului and in Braşov (Constantinescu, 1958). During that period he discovered his calling for coaching. Experience strengthened his belief that in order to be a good coach, in addition to the experience gained while doing practical activity, he had to build his activity on a solid foundation of thorough and complex knowledge from domains such as theory and methods of sportive training, medical sciences, pedagogy, psychology, etc. Enlivened by this belief, Traian Constantinescu decided to attend the courses of the School for coaches within the Physical Culture Institute from Bucharest. At graduation, in the summer of 1953, he obtained the qualification of basketball coach (***, 1953a). Shortly afterwards, he transferred to Dinamo Sportive Collective Oradea, whose team was playing in the Republican Basketball Championship, A category, males (***, 1953b).

After a period when he was a coach-player, in the autumn of 1956, he decided to commit himself entirely to coaching. The passion he proved to have in his work, the results obtained in competitions – 4th place in 1957 and 1963, 6th place in 1964 and 5th place in 1965 (Albulescu, 1981) – the value of the players formed and promoted in the national lots – Iosif Ványa, Gyula Hoffman, Alexandru Bereczky, Titus Tarău, Vasile Hupoiu (Constantinescu, 1967) – have all led to the appreciation of his value as a coach, both locally and nationally.

These first years, with all their pluses and minuses, represented for Traian Constantinescu a consolidation period of methodic knowledge, a period of accumulations in his work as a coach and sports manager, contributing to the formation of a solid basis for the stage that followed in his evolution, that of consecration and acknowledgement of his professional value.

1967 – 1981. The years of great achievements at Crişul Oradea

The transfer of the male basketball section to Crişul Oradea, the demotion into B division and the lack of necessary support in order to successfully approach the promotion into A division, all these made Traian Constantinescu to transfer to the female basketball team of the Crişul Sportive Club Oradea. His appointment as the female basketball coach (***, 1974) represented a turning point in Traian

Constantinescu's activity. Being a good organizer, a skilled coach, driven by the thought of creating something special in the basketball played in Oradea, he worked, season after season, so as the teams coached by him would achieve performances that would honor sports in our town.



Figure 1. Crișul Sports Team, national champion
(source: Photo album Traian Constantinescu)

During those years he proved that he was one of the best prepared Romanian coaches who would accomplish the training process and would elaborate the team's playing tactics according to the players he had to work with. Besides the players with experience such as Ileana Nagy-Ghiță, Maria Zima, Ana Dudaș, Agneta Nagy-Bodor, Zsuzsánna Varga-Kiss, Iuliana Balogh, Ildiko Dávid-Mitilecis, Ecaterina Vigh, Mihuț Ana, one year after the other, he promoted new players, he diligently and continuously homogenized the lot. The main results during that period were 4th place in 1969, 6th place in 1970 and 4th place in 1971 (Constantinescu, 1974).

After almost 20 years when he was a coach in Oradea, he decided to leave town and in the competition year 1971/1972 he coached the male basketball team Universitatea Timișoara (***, 1971). After two years when he was executive chairman of Football Club Bihor Oradea (***, 1972), he went back to coaching.

In the summer of 1974 he was hired as coach of the Crișul Oradea female basketball team. The work he put in, his professionalism and exigency as a coach, the players' desire for progress and assertion led to the qualitative leap, the team improving its performances, one year after the other: 9th place in 1975 (***, 1976), 7th place in 1976, 5th place in 1977 and 2nd place in 1978 (***, 1981b).

In the competition year 1978/1979, under the circumstances of several favoring factors such as accumulations in training, experience gained in competitions, value progress of the nucleus formed by the basic players, the best conditions provided as a result of certain organizational measures and of the support of certain leaders such as Nicolae Nan, Matei Botici, Gheorghe Găgeanu, Traian Constantinescu could plenary manifest his ability to coach and valorize as well as possible the players from the team lot, his flair in playing tactics elaboration and team leading, his ability to successfully promote young talents, his pedagogical

tact in motivating the players. Combining the irrefutable value and rich experience of certain players such as Ana Dudaş, Viorica Boca, Adriana Niculescu, Maria Grigoraş, Viorica Jurcă-Moraru, Elena Tabără, with the enthusiasm and assertion drive of the young players promoted from the junior sections of Crişul Sports Club (figure 1.), Magdalena Szekely, Adriana Constantinescu and Gabriela Kerekes, of the Phylology History High School, Maria Varga and Franciska Funkenhauser, of the n^o 1 School Sports Club, Ecaterina Szabo, Crişul Oradea, with a homogenous team, with an aggressive defence and attack based of fast actions, dominated the championship and conquered the title of national champion (Stănculescu, 1979).



Figure 2. The senior national team of Romania in PR China
(source: Photo album Traian Constantinescu)

During the following years, the team from Oradea did not repeat the high performance but, by the way they played, they were amongst the teams with good results, 7th place in 1980 (***, 1981b) and 5th place in 1981 (***, 1982c). During all those years, Traian Constantinescu proved that he was a coach who knew his players and had the capacity to valorize them at their best for their interest as well as for the team's interest.

In the years preceding his retirement, Traian Constantinescu coached Dinamo Oradea, team which would activate in the Republican Basketball Championship, A divisionary, male (***, 1982d), and coordinated the basketball section within the n^o 1 School Sports Club Oradea (***, 1984).

Coach of Romania's national lots

Being a coach who made himself noticed for the results of the teams he trained, who proved the fact that he had special abilities to accomplish the ongoing selection of players, who managed to promote and successfully integrate numerous players in the A divisionary team, considering all these, in 1976, the Executive Bureau of the Romanian Basketball Federation appointed him coach of the junior national lot. In the final tournament of the junior European Championship from Szczecin, Romania's team, trained by Traian Constantinescu, main coach, and Gabriel Năstase, second coach, finished on the 7th place (***, 1970).

The corollary of his activity was represented by the period 1979 – 1981 when, as main coach, he led the crew of technicians who accomplished the training of the seniors' female national lot (figure 2). Many of the results on international level of female Romanian basketball from those years are related to the name of Traian Constantinescu: 7th place at the seniors' European Championship, Banja Luka, 1980, (Albulescu, 1981), and 8th place at Ancona, 1981 (***, 1982a). His most valuable performance achieved as lot coach was the one following which the student selection team, composed of Rodica Armion, Maria Bădinici, Diana Balaș, Nina Bara, Măndica Ciubăncan, Elena Filip, Constanța Fotescu, Magdalena Páll, Verginica Popa, Camelia Solovăstru, Magdalena Szélely and Maria Zidar, won the bronze medals at the University World Games, Bucharest, 1981, one of the best performances of a basketball representative team from Romania in an official international competition (***, 1981a).



Figure 3. Traian Constantinescu
(source: Photo album Traian Constantinescu)

The years after retirements

After he retired in 1988, in 1993 the ICIM Arad team managers considered that Traian Constantinescu had not yet spoken last in female basketball in Romania, that his expertise was still needed, that through his professional value he could still bring services to basketball in Arad. Shortly the decision to appoint him coach proved to be a wise move.

The work environment created by the coach, the exigency he showed in training, the players' drive for progress and assertion led to the increase of practice quality, to the improvement of the team's evolution. As a result, at the end of the 1993/1994 edition of the national basketball competition, ICIM Arad won the title of seniors' champion, opening a long series of valuable performances (***, 1994). In 1998, as technical manager, he repeated that performance (Iordache, 1998).

With Traian Constantinescu as coach, ICIM Arad entered the circuit of interclub official international competitions. In the 1993/1994 edition of the Liliana Ronchetti Cup, on their own court, they obtained prestigious victories with FM Sankt Petersburg, Elizur Tel Aviv and SCAB `63 Clermont Ferrand (Constantinescu, 1998). In the Europe's Champion Clubs Cup, 1994/1995 edition, with Traian Constantinescu as

coach, BC ICIM Arad won against KCTikves Florida Kavadarici in the first tour and had a good behavior against BC Sipox Ruzomberok (Schneider, 1994).

Awards received as acknowledgement of his professional value and appreciation of his merits

For his activity, for the results obtained by the teams coached by him, through presidential decrees, he was awarded with the following distinctions: The Order "Sports Merit", 3rd class (***, 1982b), The Medal "Sports Merit", 1st class (***, 2004). Acknowledging his merits in the development of Romanian basketball, in 1958 the Presidium of the Great National Assembly of the Popular Republic of Romania, awarded him with the "Medal of Work" (***, 1958).

In 1991, The Ministry of Youth and Sports, at the proposal of the Romanian Basketball Federation, as acknowledgement of his professional value and appreciation of his merits in the development of basketball in our country, Traian Constantinescu was awarded with the highest national distinction for specialists in the domain of sports, that of emeritus coach (***, 1992).

For what he accomplished in his profession, Traian Constantinescu benefited of unanimous acknowledgement in the Romanian basketball, he was stimulated by sportives and all those he cooperated with and he remained in the memory and hearts of sport lovers from Oradea as a great coach, devoted to his profession, true to the last in his love for basketball.

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