

TCHOUKBALL IN SCHOOL

Patrick Erard and Marc Veuve, Michel Favre, Frédéric Roth

FOREWORD

One can say about Tchoukball that it constitutes the first example of a team sport created scientifically. Its design, guided by a total taking into consideration of its implications at the physiological, psychomotor, psychological, and psychosocial levels, sufficiently upsets the current scale of values so that with Tchoukball one has one of the principal educational sports of the future.

This text should enable teachers, whether or not they are responsible for physical education, to become acquainted with this new sport game. We shall therefore give a quick description of the context and the reasons that brought about the creation of Tchoukball in spite of the plethora of sports already existing. Then we shall indicate the principal characteristics of the game, while highlighting them with some comments. We shall devote the largest part of this booklet to the different concrete means of introducing Tchoukball in school by proposing a range of basic exercises.

This manual contains the greater part of the knowledge acquired while playing this game during more than thirty years within a club, but also during experiences in teaching. Each generalist should find in it matter for reflection, and at the same time, various methods for introducing Tchoukball properly into his classes.

INTRODUCTION

Background History

The International Federation of Physical Education created the Thulin Prize to reward

the best original work about the theory of physical education, considered from the biological, pedagogical, psychosocial, and technical points of view.

The prize was awarded for the first time in Lisbon in August 1970 to Doctor Hermann Brandt for his book, "*Etude critique et scientifique des sports d'équipe*" [Critical Scientific Review of Team Sports], based practically on profound comparative research and on the analysis of a new game, Tchoukball, that he created himself.

In his thesis, the author begins by explaining the conditions that a sport must satisfy to be useful and beneficial to man by integrating itself within the complex processes of his bodily as well as his psychic hygiene. He then quickly defines the game that he has invented. The first idea was given to him as far back as 1938, when he discovered the Basque pelota. However, despite his interest in the sport, it was impossible for him to adapt it outside of its natural context.

Later on, having become aware of the existence of Cheftel's framework, he resumed his project of a bouncing ball game, easily transposable even in rudimentary conditions, thanks to a practical set-up.

Biography of the Inventor

Hermann Brandt was born on October 6, 1897 in La Chaux-de-Fonds. He took his baccalaureate examination there in 1918, then he undertook his medical studies in Geneva. After having occupied several posts as assistant, he set himself up as a

country doctor. He settled in Geneva in October 1927.

Always interested in the problems of physical education, traveling across Europe to know the different aspects of specialized pedagogy, he became one of the pioneers of sports medicine by opening his institute of medical gymnastics.

He created in Geneva the first and the only official office of sports medicine, which he directed until the age of retirement, while devoting himself concurrently to numerous educational physical activities.

He also contributed to the launching in Switzerland of university sports, sports for the handicapped, and basketball, and he was one of the founding members of the Swiss Volleyball Federation.

He published several of his works; those relating to bicycle technique and studies on the relations between age, size, and physical performance should be pointed out in particular.

His great preoccupation consisted above all of highlighting, among the works of the great schools of physical education, that which was original and effective. To achieve that, he set up as far back as 1938 a study group that he led until 1971. With his students, and with the collaboration of Michel Favre, as early as 1968 they put in place numerous clinical and physiological tests, and they ordered the specific values of the methods of application of physical education that are found in the elaboration of the book “De l’éducation physique aux sports par la biologie” [From Physical Education to Sport Through Biology].

To crown these activities, he invented Tchoukball, which constitutes the global solution to meet the fundamental requirements of physical education.

Doctor Hermann Brandt died on November 15, 1972, after having courageously endured a long and painful illness.

The Reasons for a New Sport

We have a very vast range of diverse sports disciplines, which should enable each person to find a way to satisfy his need for action according to his tastes. In such a context, Tchoukball takes on a growing importance, not by virtue of its originality but above all because it meets a real need.

During consultations in his medical-sports office, Dr. Brandt was amazed to meet numerous patients [with] lesions that were often so serious that the aftereffects would persist throughout their lives. He was also sensitized by some psychic traumas that sportsmen showed after having played certain sports.

These observations led him to undertake a wide reflection about the world of sports. He worried in the first place about the educational value of modern physical activities that, according to his expression, must not result in the systematic manufacturing of champions, but contribute to the edification of a worthy human society. This implies a considerable effort to reach the largest number of persons by offering them a truly educational physical activity. The latest discoveries regarding “neurogenesis,” the birth of new neurons (approximately 89,00 per day), have shown that regular physical activity doubles the number of cellular divisions in the hippocampus, which increases in particular the number of new neurons (reference “*Pour la Science*” [For Science], March 2004).

Unfortunately, we must acknowledge that at the current time team sports lead to numerous criticisms. In most cases, they represent a school of violence, of which the general tactic relies on man-to-man that is

based on a technique of personal attack, the aim of which is the destruction of the adversary's game. The sports press provides irrefutable evidence that it is more and more appropriate to have a total physical engagement mainly channeled against the opponent, who often becomes under these circumstances an enemy.

For almost all team sports, the race to gigantism is all the rage, and only individuals having above-average size and resources can expect to reach the highest level. The consequences of such excesses are indicated by a limitation of the number of players and of their longevity.

Tchoukball keeps the structure of a team sport by virtue of its numerous positive psychosociological effects, but while eliminating the aforementioned dangers. Its rules make of it a non-aggressive game par excellence, and [one that is] accessible to everyone, whatever his age, sex and athletic aptitudes may be. The following chapters will demonstrate how that works practically.

The First Sport Created Scientifically

The rules of Tchoukball all result from a reflection on all of the scientific knowledge of practical application in the field of physical activities, which was the object of studies and technical experimentations for many years. They pay particular attention to all the functions of the body, such as the cardiovascular, psychomotor, psychosocial or pulmonary systems. They meet the criterion that requires that physical activities can only be legitimated according to their educational possibilities.

The great principle of the organizers of Tchoukball has become with experience, and always while striving to combine that which is useful with that which is enjoyable, to try to pass through the sport game to achieve the educational objective by

subjecting the body, in particular the brain, to efforts comprising high educational coefficients. [The fact] that these constraints concern the physiological, psychological, or even the sociological fields, and in a way without the student realizing it, appears to be a happy solution.

To maintain and develop the physical and intellectual abilities while meeting the innate need for movement, and compensating for the drawbacks of the current sedentary life.

Principal Objectives of Physical Education

To ensure a better bodily availability by developing psychomotricity and the faculties of adaptation.

To prepare a healthful occupation of leisure time and to encourage the personal taking responsibility for health by transmitting elementary knowledge in the field of sports and of physical condition.

To participate in the social education of the child by teaching tolerance and mutual aid, and by collaboration with partners.

To contribute to the formation of the child's personality by developing his spirit of decision and his creative abilities, by teaching him to surpass himself, to master his impulses, to live joys fully and to take upon himself the difficulties.

After this enumeration of the principal objectives of physical education, it is appropriate to describe how and to what extent Tchoukball satisfies their requirements.

With regard to the physical abilities, its scientific design guarantees a harmonious development of the cardiovascular, respiratory, muscle-joint and cerebrospinal systems. The rich range of gestural possibilities that the shots, the passes and the

defense of Tchoukball offer contribute to the improvement of bodily availability.

Run properly, Tchoukball, sport game for all, enables the competitor to compare himself to the others or top his past performances while avoiding involving pride and the over-estimation of his abilities.

One of the essential objectives of Tchoukball is certainly social education. Usually planning is aimed above all at psychomotor behavior at the expense of the social and affective domains. Better than any other team sport, Tchoukball, by its state of mind, is a school of tolerance and of respect for the adversary.

Finally, the personality also draws certain advantages from the potentialities of Tchoukball. No other team sport, apart from volleyball even if its technical aspect remains less easily accessible, develops creativity as much. In effect, “the adversary” intervening only indirectly by his position on defense [means that] all possibilities are offered to the players in the constructive phase of the game. The spirit of decision has a determining role, for the player must constantly judge the situation. In addition, the basic rules that prevent walking, keeping the ball for more than three seconds or making more than three passes before shooting call for quick decisions, whether one is a ball carrier, partner, or “adversary.”

Dangers, Abuses and Sporting Accidents among Young People

Physical exercises, during puberty and during the years that precede it, influence favorably the development of the organism. It prevents, among other things, cardiovascular diseases and static disorders. The urbanization of our society reduces the child’s natural need for movement, he lacks space to play, school imposes upon him hours of immobility, and mechanization and

comfort also serve to make rare the opportunities for physical exercises.

On the other hand, in contrast, one sees the development of the tendency to involve younger and younger children in trainings with a view to high performances. Even if this method sometimes produces spectacular results, it remains debatable on many points. Research has not yet demonstrated all of the harmful effects of a training [that is] too advanced for a body that is still being formed, but we already notice an accelerated aging of certain joints, for example.

It is certain that training plays a large role in the development of physical aptitudes; however, the modifications and adaptations of the body must not be overestimated. Endurance training of an eleven-year-old child makes it possible to improve his <VO₂ max> performances, without necessarily strengthening the cardiovascular system, which grows only with age.

The lesions and the unfortunate consequences due to sporting exaggerations among young people do not manifest themselves immediately, but reappear only at the adult age or even at the time of old age. These aftereffects are related in particular the locomotive system, premature arthroses, and serious ligamentary and joint problems. Therefore, [there is a need for] prudence in involving children in the intensive training of competitive sport.

From the medical point of view, and this without speaking about all of the problems relating to the use of pharmacological agents, the intensive training of children and of youth appears to be very questionable. The spectacular exploits that it offers us are paid for by an investment that is often too considerable, from the physical as well as the psychological point of view, to the detriment of health. This is why scholastic sports must attach less importance to performance than to the equilibrium

provided by a well-paced and varied activity.

Comments on the Rules

Tchoukball is played on all kinds of fields. The size of the latter constitutes a determining factor, and it must be established according to the physical and technical aptitudes of the students. The more the dimensions of the field become larger, the more the area to be defended becomes considerable, which requires a more and more advanced tactic and an increase of spurts and of long and precise passes.

The ball must not frighten the students, and the choice of a ball lighter than that of handball gives good results. However, an excessively light ball is not satisfactory, for it has unpredictable effects that sometimes make it difficult to control. There exist on the market numerous balls [that are] not too heavy and [that] meet these criteria.

In principle, the game authorizes play on the basis of one against one. This situation is found during certain training exercises. So that the game leads to a certain performance, it is necessary, however, to begin with three against three or four against four on half of the field, or even only in the area of the goalkeeper of handball. As soon as the students master the shots and the catches, Tchoukball can be introduced by means of little games. If the spirit of the game is learned and respected by the students, Tchoukball certainly permits the mixing of the sexes of the players or also the participation of persons of different ages. In addition, size and physical force being only secondary factors, the game is open to all the students. It is clear that the same tolerance must be shown with regard to the less skillful, but this is a part of the game and of sports education.

The shots, the passes and the catches come mainly from handball and from volleyball. The player maintains great freedom in these domains, not being hindered by an adversary, and he can give free rein to his fantasy, which gives the game a variety of very interesting and educational movements. The technical moves have an effect on the quickness of the game and on its spectacular side. If there exist specific shots that everyone should know, one also finds a vast panoply of shots that are the specialty of a certain player, according to his build, his strength, his character, or his imagination. This maximum freedom enables the development of the student's creativity. The leader, the trainer, or the teacher of physical education must be perfectly aware of this and encourage it for a better blossoming of the personality.

Not to walk with the ball in the hand prevents one or two players from monopolizing the game. Tchoukball is, essentially, collective and calls for a participation of all the players. One must not conclude however that this rule implies immobility. Tactically one seeks, as soon as mastery of the basic moves allows, an evolution in the game that is based only on moving passes. The sense of placement then takes on a very important and immobility becomes absolutely inconceivable.

To be able to keep the ball for three seconds enables the beginner to judge the situation and to play unhurriedly. During the first lessons, the students must benefit to the maximum from this rule and in that way avoid bad passes. Even better players should begin slowly until concentration reaches a good level.