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## A prominent footballer as a role model for young athletes

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to illustrate the need for personal role models for young athletes on the example of the Portuguese player Cristiano Ronaldo. Currently, the requirements of young football adepts are constantly growing. Football is booming and evolving very quickly. The players exceed the limits of their own field and intellectual abilities. Along with this, the awareness of players increases. And hence the need for individual development increases as well. Coping with the difficulties that arise on the path of a young athlete becomes the norm. Sports authorities play an important role in the training process. Nowadays, young people look for authorities among the most prominent athletes. One example of such prominent athletes is the Portuguese football player Cristiano Ronaldo, who is characterized by an exceptional attitude to training and an exemplary pursuit of his own sports career. The example of a great footballer shows the way full of sacrifices, which is necessary to achieve high sports results in the international arena. The work will present an attempt to refer to role models in sport on the example of the excellent player and illustrating young players who pursue a specific goal that achieving specific results often involves overcoming many obstacles.

**Keywords:** authority, football, training process

### Introduction

Football, like virtually all sports, is evolving. According to many authors, sport is becoming an increasingly physically demanding field (Bompa et al. 2013, Kalinowski, Jurdeczka 2015, Łomża 2017). Currently, athletes are expected to constantly exceed the limits of their own fitness abilities. Today's sport requires a great deal of sacrifice and a complete commitment to the discipline, including: 100% sacrifice; perfectionism; willingness to take a risk; desire to compete; effectiveness of action; perseverance; confidence; humility; hunger for success, visualization of victory (Łomża 2017). When practicing sports, you also have to take into account numerous failures. Only people who will be characterized by determination and mental toughness will be able to develop in sport.

This work is a presentation of the appropriate attitude to training, sport and own body. The example of an excellent footballer - Cristiano Ronaldo presents a path full of sacrifices, which is necessary to achieve high sports results on the international arena (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). A huge role in the training process is played by regular training

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and its components, healthy eating, as well as having authorities worth following, who become an example and motivation. All these aspects have a significant impact on sports development (Lee, Little 2005).

The work will present an attempt to appeal to the authorities in the arena of sport and inspire young people to lead a healthy lifestyle, play sports, and eat properly. Showing people who pursue a specific goal that achieving specific results often involves overcoming many obstacles.

The aim of the work is to show the legitimacy of having role models serving as authorities on the example of the Portuguese football player Cristiano Ronaldo.

The following research questions were formulated adequately to the aim of the work:

1. Have there been any benefits of playing sports based on Ronaldo's experience?
2. Does Ronaldo's lifestyle lead to development in sports / football?
3. Has taking care of his body shape influenced the image of Cristiano Ronaldo?
4. Is the path to success simple?

### **Influence of athletes on functioning in society**

Authority is a very lofty term for a person who is characterized by personality and values that are worth following (Piórkowski 2016). Authorities have always been very important in society. They are needed especially in upbringing and education. Nowadays, we observe a decrease in the role of standard authorities such as: parents, teachers, trainers (Wasylewicz 2017). Modern "idols", including sportsmen, play an increasingly important role.

Athletes play a very important role in the society (Sillamy 1995). Today, in the era of mass media, access to the life of famous sportsmen is much easier. People often follow famous athletes via social networks or television. They read about their everyday life and stories of their way to success. Young people follow their favorite athletes, they want to train, eat, look and even live like them. Therefore, one of the most important roles of these athletes should be to motivate society to engage in sports - undertake all kinds of physical activity and lead a healthy lifestyle. They should convey the correct values.

Another aspect influencing the importance of authorities in society may be their difficult life stories, showing that "idols" are people who often struggle with traumatic experiences. These stories prove that even in difficult life situations you can achieve success. Cristiano Ronaldo is a good example, who was mocked at a boarding school and he became a role model and a leader (Caioli 2013). Another great example is the Polish football player Jakub Błaszczykowski. It can be assumed that the tragic childhood experience greatly increased the psychological strength of the footballer and released his will to fight, as well as strengthened his character (Błaszczykowski, Domagalik 2015). As it can be assumed, for many people it is a personality model. Another authority may be Leo Messi, who was not expected to make a career in the world of sports due to health problems and poor physical conditions (Casulo 2014). The footballer proved that nothing is impossible. He became one of the best footballers in the world and an idol of the 21st century. These stories can motivate not only the athletes, but also all the rest of the people striving for a specific goal. For young sports enthusiasts, they can be an example that despite adversities it is worth working.

Authorities are people characterized with a good heart who care about the good of others and who want to help those in need (Piórkowski 2016). Based on press reports, it can be assumed that Cristiano Ronaldo is such a person. The nobility and empathy of

the footballer are evidenced by numerous charity campaigns in which the Portuguese star takes part (Caioli 2013).

### **The elements of training in football**

Training is an inseparable element of sport, which is a long-term, planned way, aimed at the best sports results. The result of this process is a constant, deliberate variability of loads in individual types of training (Sozański 1999). It is worth noting that not only the improvement of general strength, speed, power, explosiveness, but also nutrition, regeneration and prevention against injuries are important for athletes (Leśniak et al. 2017). Nutrition and regeneration are interrelated processes, because the nutrition has a huge impact on the better regeneration of the body (Leśniak et al. 2017). Ronaldo is a person who perfectly applies the above-mentioned components of training from an early age. According to Łomża (2017), a properly selected diet should be individualized and adjusted to the needs of a given person. During the training process, numerous micro-injuries occur in the body, which are rebuilt during rest - regeneration (Leśniak et al. 2017). Regeneration is an integral part of football as well as all sports. It requires as much attention as training (Łomża 2017). Only comprehensive preparation can ensure harmonious football development. Ronaldo is an example of the implementation of these assumptions.

### **Functioning of Ronaldo**

One of the sports authorities close to the ideals of the concept of physical culture (Osiński 2002) is Cristiano Ronaldo, who was born on 02/02/1985 in Funchal on the island of Madeira in a poor family (Caioli 2013). He started his adventure with football playing in the street in front of the house, just like Johan Cruyff, who reported that he improved his technical skills on asphalt roads (Casulo 2014). Street matches were the most important competitions where he acquired and perfected his technique (Caioli 2013).

The first clubs of the Portuguese were Andorinha and Nacional Madera. He was characterized by high motor skills and poor physical conditions (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). The first professional club was Sporting Lisboa, where he was going through the most difficult moment in his career. Separation and longing for family at the age of 12 were very big challenges (Caioli 2013). Ronaldo was developing very quickly thanks to systematic training. Over time, he gained authority and became the leader of his team.

On October 7, 2002, CR7 scored the first goal and became the youngest goalscorer in the club's history at the age of 17 years, 8 months and 2 days (Caioli 2013). He was very self-confident which is typical for authorities (Piórkowski 2016). Portugal's victory at the Under-21 Youth National Team tournament led to a transfer to Manchester United. Numerous goals and assists allowed him to obtain the status of "idol" and resulted in a transfer to Real Madrid. The official presentation at Real Madrid took place on July 6, 2009 in the presence of 80,000 fans. (Caioli 2013). This shows how an athlete like Cristiano Ronaldo can impact the environment. He played in this club for nearly 9 years with numerous successes. He became the all-time top scorer and a Real Madrid legend scoring 450 goals in 438 games. Ronaldo has been playing for Juventus Turin since 2018.

The footballer has won the national championship in countries such as: England, Spain and Italy, as well as the cups of these countries. Ronaldo and his team won the

Champions League for five times, the Club World Cup for four times and the European Super Cup for two times. He was a gold and silver medalist at the European Championships with the national team and a bronze medalist at the World Championships. He is a five-time winner of the Golden Ball.

Ronaldo's successes and records make him one of the most successful footballers in the world. The analysis of his sports career shows the way that led him to achieve outstanding results in sports.

### **Training and its components in Ronaldo's sports life**

Initially, Cristiano was characterized by a body with a small amount of muscle mass (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). Since he was a young boy, he was aware of the importance of work and training. Ronaldo's biggest transformation took place when he played for Manchester. The inspiration was the admiration for the very well-built body of his teammate Diego Forlan (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). He learned from others and took advantage of more experienced players' advice, which resulted in a positive change in the body of the player.

Cristiano owes his high level of motor preparation thanks to his titanic work, kilometers covered in training and genetic conditions. Systematic swimming training played an important role in improving endurance. On the other hand, individual training aimed at various types of sprints, ascents, which he presents on his social networks plays an important role in improving the speed. According to Carlos Bruno, the player owes his amazing motor skills thanks to genetics and spending time actively in his childhood: "He used to go home only to eat and sleep, he spent the rest of his time on the street, running, jumping, climbing trees, climbing walls, playing the ball" (Pereira, Gallardo 2014, p. 35). Despite constant self-improvement, according to experts, there are many technical imperfections in the footballer's run, which, however, do not bother him on the pitch (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). The footballer has been working individually on perfecting shots on goal from the age of 15. Coach Luis Martins stated that Cristiano Ronaldo always did more than the coaches required (Pereira, Gallardo 2014).

### **Resting and nutrition in Ronaldo's life**

Cristiano Ronaldo makes a point to regeneration. The process of regeneration of a footballer begins right after the match. Immediately after exercise, he drinks isotonic drinks, eats fruit or even pizza. He takes a shower using cold and sometimes warm water (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). Ronaldo openly says that "the time of rest is sacred to me. I sleep eight hours a day" (Pereira, Gallardo 2014, p. 158).

Cristiano Ronaldo really cares about his diet. The footballer primarily avoids sweet carbonated drinks, highly fatty food, processed foods and sweets. He is a person who hardly ever consumes alcohol (Caioli 2013). Ronaldo usually eats about three thousand kilocalories a day (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). This is included in 5/6 meals that are light but wholesome (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). The basis of Ronaldo's diet is protein, which has a very positive effect on the maintenance and development of muscle mass and supports regenerative processes. On the other hand, carbohydrates and fats are supposed to provide a lot of energy (Łomża 2017). Via social networks, Cristiano encourages people to healthy nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

## **Cristiano Ronaldo's mental preparation**

Ronaldo is characterized by high internal motivation and ambition. This is confirmed by the words of Valter Di Salvo, who stated that "he is the most ambitious footballer I have met because he has a different psyche than other stars" (Pereira, Gallardo 2014, p. 67). The Portuguese is a person who is characterized by great self-confidence. He calls himself the best footballer in the world (Caioli 2013). He is a bit egocentric. Moreover, criticism makes him put even greater effort (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). He is perceived as a very ambitious person striving for perfectionism. He is the type of leader. It has a beneficial effect on others. In teams, he becomes a "natural leader". In addition to the above-mentioned, the footballer is presented as: nice, friendly and funny.(Pereira, Gallardo 2014). Despite his huge success, he continues to work on controlling emotions. (Pereira, Gallardo 2014).

## **Summary and conclusions**

The presented opinions and observations of sports people regarding physical activity were intended to illustrate the appropriate attitude conditioning the achievement of high sports results (Caioli 2013). Discussing role models based on sports stars and how to function seems to be justified. Nowadays, in order to achieve high results in various sports, including football, not only stubbornness, skills, hard work, but also having authorities are needed (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). This work presents an example of an outstanding athlete who can become such an authority for young people. This is evidenced both by his great sports achievements and the road he had to overcome. The profile of a prominent sports personality, such as Cristiano Ronaldo, can be considered in many aspects. Starting with his enormous achievements, sports titles, individual awards, commitment, titanic work or the cult of a perfect body, which alludes to the ancient Kalos Kagathos (Chłopek - Labo 2013), a combination of good soul and physical beauty. Based on the analyzes, it can be assumed that Cristiano Ronaldo is a body cult believer. The footballer is presented as a perfectionist (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). Through the use of specific training and proper nutrition, his body has achieved almost exemplary parameters over the years (Caioli 2013). The transformation of the body was described in book of Pereira and Gallardo (2014), who recall the authority that Uruguayan player Diego Forlan became for Ronaldo in Manchester United (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). Based on the analysis of the literature, it can be assumed that the Portuguese meets most of the requirements for authorities (Piórkowski 2016). Observing the career of the footballer, you can observe many benefits from playing sports, but also self-denials.

For the footballer, sport is primarily work, passion, but also great fun and a brilliant way to spend time. This is precisely confirmed by Judycki's description of sports activity (2008). It can be assumed that in the case of Cristiano, sports improves mood and contributes to the balance between the body and the psyche (Mazur 2014). Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that the data was taken from books and media. On this basis, his figure can be presented as a role model, but it cannot be stated with certainty because we don't know the player personally. Numerous authors present in their reports that athletes have much more energy and are able to focus attention better (Lee, Little 2005). Moreover, the advantages of a sports lifestyle are often described (Judycki 2008). However, it is worth remembering that extreme sport is also a huge sacrifice and injuries (Łomża 2017).

Additionally, nowadays, just like Ronaldo, people who regularly train some sports, such as football, have great body shapes with a lot of muscle mass and a small amount of fat mass (Little 2005). It is also assumed that sport can be an attempt to get to know one's own personality and to examine the limit of mental endurance (Judycski, 2008). In the case of the Portuguese, reports on this subject are diverse. Nevertheless, based on Ronaldo's enormous successes, it can be assumed that he has very high volitional qualities (Pereira, Gallardo 2014). The path presented in this paper that the footballer had to overcome was not simple and easy, but it took him to the top.

On the example of Ronaldo, one can observe how important sport is also in terms of social aspects. Through sport, Ronaldo obtained such significant material goods that allowed him to help his loved ones. In addition, Cristiano's commitment to career development enabled his brother Hugo to fight drug addiction (Caioli 2013). The charity of the Portuguese star was repeatedly highlighted in the media (Caioli 2013). It is difficult to clearly define, based on media reports, how big this activity is, nevertheless it is worth following for young people, who often feel lost nowadays (Caioli 2013). It is assumed that through sport, people significantly improve their condition, motor skills such as strength, speed, endurance or flexibility (Łomża 2017). Observing the career and development of Cristiano Ronaldo, it can be assumed that it is a perfect example. The lifestyle leading to success in sport is mainly regular training, a good diet, proper regeneration and living in the right way as for an athlete (Łomża, 2017). According to John Littl (2005), Bruce Lee was such a great athlete mainly due to "curiosity and intelligence, dedication and persistence, and his focus on goals" (Lee, Little 2005, p.12). The author of the book "The Art of Body Shaping" believes that Lee devoted every moment of his free time to training. It can be assumed that the "Bruce Lee" of today is the Portuguese player. He is impressive in many aspects. The way to the top in every area of life, including sports, is associated with many difficulties and sacrifices. Ronaldo's example proves this. The Portuguese player achieved a lot by becoming one of the best footballers in the world despite not being the most talented in his peer group (Caioli 2013). Moreover, he experienced his failures very much, reacting very emotionally. Hence, it seems that this makes him more beneficent in one more aspect and he can be an authority for many people. In our country, Jakub Błaszczykowski can be such an authority, characterized by the steadfast character of, among others who was not broken even by the family tragedy in which he participated (Błaszczykowski, Domagalik 2015). The Polish player is a perfect example for young athletes to follow, just like Ronaldo or Robert Lewandowski, who was rejected by Legia Warszawa at the age of 19 (Lewandowski, Zawioła, 2013). Everyone overcame many difficulties on their way. Therefore, they should be presented as role models.

In response to the research questions, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. Based on the conducted studies of the literature, it can be assumed that the benefits of practicing sports are indisputable.
2. Ronaldo's functioning and lifestyle led to his development in sports.
3. Based on this study, it can be observed that taking care of the body shape has an impact on Cristiano Ronaldo's sports results, image and marketing value.
4. Based on the analysis of life of the Portuguese star, it can be assumed that achieving such a huge success is very difficult and is associated with numerous failures.

In my opinion, young people today have no authorities. Examples of such prominent athletes as Ronaldo can help in achieving not only sports goals, but also overcoming broadly understood life difficulties.

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