Team cohesion

Before I start talking about Team Cohesion, I want to take a closer look at cohesiveness and what it exactly is. Cohesiveness means that you feel included, responsible for others in a group or you feel like the group works together good. Only if the group has high cohesiveness, you will feel that way. If you are in a group with low cohesiveness, some group members might feel excluded or are jealous of one another. In a group with high cohesiveness, the group will be able to manage stress better and reach goals. The group will also spend less time fighting and arguing. As a member of such a group, your values should be similar to those of the group. Group values should also be important for the members to keep the cohesiveness. A symbol also helps by representing the team. An example would be a color or handshake or mascot. This symbol will help feel united as one. Another factor that helps cohesiveness is if the members are committed to the group. That includes having certain purposes in a group that might not be so important alone, but with the purposes of the other members, it might get the group to a great result. Some members will have to make sacrifices in a group for it to be successful and you as a member have to accept that fact. If you do not do that, your groups cohesiveness can be lowered and even lead to the breakup of the group (McLeod, 1974).

If we take that information of cohesiveness, we can apply it to a team. That means team cohesion exists, when the team works together and stays united. Every team member has to know their role and be satisfied with it. The team goals and values should be influenced by the individual ones. To understand team cohesion better, we will have to look at task cohesion, social cohesion, direct and indirect measurement.

Task cohesion includes team members working together to reach a goal. An example would be that several team members set up a play and score a goal by doing this. Social cohesion on the other hand involves how much the team members like each other and being part of the group. Without social cohesion, the team will not work together good, split up in small groups and that might break the team apart in the end if it gets worse. It is important to understand those different types of cohesion, especially if you want to evaluate a team. If you do not do that, you might get the wrong results from your evaluation.

Now, we have to distinguish between the indirect and direct measurement approach. The indirect measurement approach is when you ask every team member about how much they like all the members of the team. If you add up the score of all the team members, you will get a measurement for your team's cohesion. This way of measuring team cohesion is not used a lot because it does not show a significant relationship between the behavior and the cohesion of a team and its individuals. The direct measurement approach is when you ask every player if they enjoy playing for the team and if they feel the team works together as a team. With those two measurements, it is also important to clarify which measurement you are using to get the right result of your team's cohesion. Otherwise your results might be very different than what would have been expected (Cox, 2010).

The next thing, I want to talk about is the conceptual model that is used for team cohesion. Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer have developed this model, which includes the members' orientation to achieve a goal or work together with others and if you want to be in the group or if you want to make sure

that you get what you need. If you put all four of these four factors together, you will get four different parts of team cohesion: group integration -task (GI-T), group integration-social (GI-S), individual attractions to the group-task (ATG-T), and individual attractions to the group-social (ATG-S). You get this result because team cohesion is multidimensional as mentioned earlier with a wide variety of characteristics. Team cohesion is also dynamic because it can change with time and get a different form than it used to have for a team. The team might change from a social to a task orientation or the other way around. It can also change with new team members or old ones quitting. There are a lot of factors that influence team cohesion. I will talk about those later in this paper more in detail. Another characteristic of team cohesion is that the team stays together for a reason. That means it is instrumental and the team is used to reach a certain goal. The last characteristic is affective. This indicates that team members like to be on the team and it suites them. If you do not have this factor, your team might have arguments, fights or even split up (Carron, Eys, & Burke, 2007).

Since we already know what team cohesion is, it is time to find out how to measure team cohesion. Several inventories exist to measure team cohesion like the Sport Cohesiveness Questionnaire, the Team Cohesion Questionnaire, the Sport Cohesion Instrument, the Team Psychology Questionnaire, and the Group Environment Questionnaire. The best inventory for psychologists to measure team cohesion is the Group Environment Questionnaire (Cox, 2010).

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) is designed to measure the cohesion of a group. The development of this questionnaire was influenced

by the conceptual model. The GEQ will also tell us how the result will influence the group's work and its success. The GEQ considers all the dimensions of team cohesion. The results are pretty accurate and open a new way to measure team cohesion. It also helps to understand how team cohesion works better (O'Sullivan, 2010). It uses four items to measure GI-S and ATG-T and five items to measure GI-T and ATG-S. To respond to the items, you have an eight-point Likert scale that you can use. It ranges from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing. According to Schultz, Eom, Smoll and Smith (1994), the GEQ measures the four dimensions of the conceptual model pretty good (Cox, 2010).

Now, I want to talk about the determinants of group cohesion. There are four: personal factors, team factors, leadership factors, and environmental factors. First, let us talk about the environmental factors of team cohesion. The level where you compete influences your environmental factor as well as the size of your team. Research has shown that task cohesion is greater in high school levels than in college levels, when they gave the GEQ to several players. The size of teams also matters. One study showed that task cohesion is greater in small groups and decreases as the size increases of the team. Social cohesion on the other hand does the opposite. It increases with the increase of number of team members and decreases with the decrease of number of team members. A second study shows that with the increase of the number of team members, the cohesiveness decreases and gets weaker. This result is also correct for other groups, not only teams.

Next are the personal factors that influence team cohesion. In a team it is important to be satisfied with your performance or position on the team and

carry that over to your team. If not, you will stop working hard and start getting less involved with the team. It is also important to identify yourself with the team because you are part of it. Also the stronger the team cohesion is, the more likely it will be that each member will give their best for the team and feels comfortable that the team can overcome negative events.

Other determinants are the leadership factors for team cohesion. These factors are influenced by the leader's behavior and the decisions the leader makes. Task cohesion increases when the coach gives the team social support, good instructions and is fair to every player. It is also better to give positive feedback to the athletes and let the athletes work together with the coach. For example if they set goals together or discuss before practice what they need to work on.

The last determinants involved in team cohesion are the team factors. In a team it is crucial that you know your role, are satisfied with it, and perform well in the role you have. If it is not the case, the task cohesion from the team will decrease. Another aspect that helps with team cohesion is having clear rules for all team members. Having those rules alone is not enough though. A coach needs to make sure that everybody follows those team rules and that if someone does not, they get punished for it. A player can help by informing team mates if they do not follow these rules. The last factor of the team factors is feeling confident in your team that it can master situations. If team members feel confident, they are more than likely to perform better and their team cohesion is greater (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, & Carron, 2001).

The next thing I think is interesting is the question what kind of relationship exists between performance and cohesion. Until now research has had a hard time finding the answer to this question and there is not a lot of success answering this question. The cohesiveness and performance relationship is more task oriented and cohesion is stronger in small groups. The performance and cohesion relationship seems like it has a stronger relationship. That tells us that the change in performance will have a greater affect on the cohesion of a team than the change in cohesion to the performance. Nonetheless, an increase in cohesion can increase the performance. Also keep in mind that cohesion is multidimensional and dynamic, therefore all those factors work together and it is hard to tell what relationship is the most accurate (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, & Carron, 2001).

The last thing I want to mention about team cohesion is ways you can improve it. I will talk about ten different ways you can do that.

Let athletes practice different positions in practice to help them value what their teammates are doing. That way the athletes will know what it is like to play that position.

Coaches should make sure they know information about their athletes. An example would be their birthday or what the athlete likes to do outside of practice.

It is important that the athletes are proud of what they have done and that they feel important with the role they have on the team.

Coaches and athletes should work together as one unit because it is not only the coach's team. The players are part of it too and should have their right to be involved in decision making.

As a team, you want to have goals that you want to reach. You should have several different ones throughout the season and feel proud about the ones you have accomplished. Once you have reached all of them, it is time to set new goals.

Mentioned earlier, it is important that each player knows their role. The coach needs to make sure that everyone knows their role and how this role is important for the team.

There will always be conflicts in teams. You cannot avoid those, because without any conflicts, there would be no interest in the team to reach a goal.

Coaches should make sure that no groups are formed within the team because those are counterproductive to reach team goals and reduce cohesion.

Drills should not only be used to improve skills, but also to improve team work and trusting your teammates.

The last way to improve cohesion is to use positive feedback even after lost games. Point out the things the team has managed well even though they have lost to make sure to boost their confidence and cohesion (Cox, 2010).

My conclusion is that team cohesion is important for every team. It has several positive effects on the team and helps to overcome bad games or

days. To evaluate your team's cohesion it is important to keep all the factors in mind to get the right result. An aspect that I thought was very important is that not only the players contribute to the team's cohesion, but the coach has also a big influence on the team's cohesion. That is why I think, coaches should be aware of this fact and make sure they do everything in their power to increase cohesion in their team. Also each member of the team has to feel important and included for the team to have a good cohesion. Without team cohesion, the team will never be as successful as a team that has a good cohesion.