COMPARISON OF DECLARATIVE TACTICAL KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN U-11 AND U-17 YOUTH SOCCER PLAYERS

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Introduction
Skilled players show a more elaborate knowledge basis during the performance of specific tasks (1). Therefore, these players differ from the less-skilled ones with respect to the kind and amount of knowledge they possess, besides the way they employ this knowledge during tasks. Thus, the aim of this study was to compare the declarative tactical knowledge between U-11 and U-17 youth soccer players.

Methods
The sample comprised 36 youth soccer players, equally grouped into U-11 and U-17 age levels. The instrument used to assess declarative tactical knowledge was the test developed by Mangas (1999). This instrument includes the assessment of 13 offensive soccer video sequences. The scenes are projected onto a large screen and, prior to the end of each sequence, the video is paused and the participant verbalizes the best move for the player in possession. For data analysis, scores were calculated according to the quality of response in which 1 point is given for the best, 0.75 for the second best, 0.5 for the third best and 0.25 for the worst response. No points are given for wrong answers. Descriptive statistics (means and SD) were performed. Shapiro-Wilk test was used to verify data distribution. To compare means between both age levels, Mann-Whitney U was utilized (P<0.05). SPSS 18.0 was used for statistical procedures.

Results & Discussion
Statistically significant differences were observed between the two age levels in scores 1 (P=0.001), 0.5 (P=0.04) and 0.25 (P=0.026), while only in the best responses (1 pt.) U-17 players were superior when compared to U-11 players. These results are explained by the fact that more experienced players present a larger knowledge basis, thus being able to identify more relevant stimuli underpinning decision-making, and therefore becoming more efficient (1).

Conclusion
It is concluded that U-17 players display better declarative tactical knowledge in comparison with U-11 players.

References

Keywords: soccer, tactics, declarative tactical knowledge

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