

## Prof. Dr. Dietmar Martin Samulski: Life and legacy

### Prof. Dr. Dietmar Martin Samulski: Vida e legado

S. Serpa, D. Hackfort, J.R. Nitsch

EDITORIAL | EDITORIAL



A Direção da Revista Motricidade honra-me com um convite para escrever sobre Dietmar Samulsky.

É muito difícil escrever sobre um amigo que partiu! Sobretudo cujo processo de luta contra a doença acompanhei, ainda que de longe.

Os eventos internacionais da psicologia do desporto juntavam-nos regularmente. Em cada encontro Dietmar comunicava a esperança decorrente de mais uma batalha ganha, a energia para o combate constante, a capacidade de navegar sobre a doença e crescer fazendo coisas geradas pela luta, como o livro que escreveu sobre viver com o cancro.

Mantinha, entretanto, a ilusão de trabalhar e produzir na área da psicologia do desporto, assumindo, também, a missão interior de contribuir para a formação e acompanhamento académico daqueles que gostaria que o continuassem, e ao seu trabalho, e que guiou, como Mestre, ao longo de anos.

Ainda que tivesse clara consciência da finitude da vida, que sabia vir a acontecer mais breve do que a idade sugeria, fazia planos para atividades futuras.

E sempre presente – mas sempre – no seu espírito e no seu coração estava a família que lhe dava suporte afetivo, força interior e razão para a luta.

Saber do seu falecimento, não obstante esperado, deixou-me triste.

Dietmar estava entre os meus amigos. Conheci-o há mais de 20 anos em Belo Horizonte num congresso que lá organizou e,

desde então, a psicologia do desporto foi-nos juntando.

Estivemos juntos no *Managing Council da International Society of Sport Psychology - ISSP* para o qual foi eleito em 2001, em Skyathos, Grécia, e reeleito em 2005 em Sydney, Austrália.

Acompanhei a importância do seu trabalho no desenvolvimento da psicologia do desporto brasileira e internacional. Destaco o seu papel na SOSUPE – Sociedade Sul-Americana de Psicologia do Esporte – e, por via disso, a influência que teve no desenvolvimento da nossa área profissional e científica na América do Sul.

Um dos seus últimos atos de presidente da SOSUPE foi convidar-me para conferencista no congresso de 2010, em Buenos Aires, para onde voámos juntos desde Belo Horizonte onde estive, também a seu convite, participando num seminário que organizou na sua Universidade.

Recebeu-me em casa e levou-me a visitar a cidade de Ouro Preto. Conversámos muito pelo caminho. Foi conversa de amigos, mais do que de colegas. Lá, ofereceu-me um pássaro em pedra do artesanato local que coloquei em minha casa em local onde o contemplo todos os dias. Expressa a sua generosidade e humanidade, prolongando-lhe a presença para além da vida física. Nessa ocasião, em Ouro Preto, comprou também uma linda joia para sua mulher, Valquíria, colocando na escolha um amor e ternura que me emocionaram.

Estava previsto para o passado mês de Outubro, em São Paulo, Brasil, um novo encontro com Dietmar durante o Congresso da Sociedade Ibero-Americana de Psicologia do Desporto. Já lá não pôde estar devido ao agra-

vamento do seu estado de saúde. Na altura contactámo-nos por telefone. Foi a última vez que falámos e guardo a emoção desse momento que pressentia não se vir a repetir.

Pessoalmente, e na condição de Presidente da *International Society of Sport Psychology* – ISSP, sinto muito a sua partida deste mundo. A ISSP perdeu um elemento importante, tal como a psicologia do desporto do Brasil e internacional, com destaque para a da América Latina. O Obituário que a seguir se publica é uma homenagem que a ISSP presta à sua memória pela mão do seu colega na Universidade de Desporto de Colónia e companheiro fraterno desde então, Dieter Hackfort, atual Past-President da ISSP, e do seu Professor e Mestre em Colónia que o orientou no doutoramento, Jurgen Nitsch.

O exemplo profissional que nos transmitiu e, sobretudo, o seu carácter humanista devem guiar-nos. Assim homenagearemos a sua memória e seremos melhores.

Sídonio Serpa, PhD  
Presidente da ISSP

---

It was a disconcerting message at the end of 2012 for the international sport science community and sport psychology colleagues from all over the world when we learned about the loss of Prof. Dr. Dietmar Martin Samulski. In his very active and impressively productive life he even continued to contribute significantly to research, and to the dissemination and application of knowledge in sport psychology when he had to fight against a serious disease for the last years in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) until December 1, 2012.

Dietmar Samulski was born in Gummersbach, a tiny German town, but well known in sports due to its world class handball team. In this environment his talent for running (100m) and handball was detected quickly and playing sports became a central issue in his life. As a consequence of these experiences and an emer-

ging interest in sport science he decided to study sport science at the German Sport University Cologne, where he graduated (Diplom) in 1974. Already as a student (1972) he joined the Institute of Psychology and was involved in the developmental phase of this institute. During this time he also studied and graduated (1977) in psychology at the University in Bonn. By the end of 1977 he took the opportunity to sign a contract for a project funded by the German Government for the German – Columbian cooperation to develop sport science in Columbia (Cali). On January 1, 1982 he returned to the Institute of Psychology and until August 15, 1987 he was notably involved in two research projects on “Self Motivation in Sport”, the institute’s very first projects that were sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG). It was during this time that he completed his dissertation (PhD) “Self Motivation in Physical Education – Analysis of Self Motivation Processes on the Basis of Motivation-Theory Concepts, Pertinent Intervention Programs and an Interview Study with Pupils and Physical Education Teachers” (1985; supervised by Prof. Dr. Jürgen R. Nitsch), which was published in 1986 and has been awarded with the university’s prize for outstanding doctoral theses.

In 1987 Dietmar Samulski entered a third phase in his professional life in Belo Horizonte, where he became well known beyond the borders of Brazil as a sport psychology expert. With the support of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) he accepted a guest professorship at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) and in time became a permanent lecturer at that university. He was given the position as coordinator of the Laboratório de Psicologia do Esporte (LAPES) and in the periods of 1998-2002 and 2006-2008 also the position as coordinator of the Centro de Excelência Esportiva (CENESP), amongst other positions of responsibility and leadership at the UFMG. On March 16, 2010 he reached

the climax of his university career when he was appointed “Professor Titular” for sport psychology at the Escola de Educação Física Fisioterapia e Terapia Ocupacional (EEFFTO) of the UFMG.

Dietmar Samulski’s outstanding scientific reputation extended well beyond the university borders. This is impressively shown by the nominations to take up significant positions within the Scientific Community like memberships in editorial boards of various scientific journals, chairman and organizer of scientific congresses and symposia, and above all active managing council membership of various scientific societies for many years: President of the Sociedade Mineira de Psicologia do Esporte (SOMIPE), the Sociedade Brasileira de Psicologia do Esporte (SOBRAPE, 2002-2006), the Sociedade Sulamericana de Psicologia do Esporte (SOSUPE, 2006-2011) and membership of the managing council of the Sociedad Iberoamericana de Psicologia del Deporte (SIPD). In 2001, Dietmar was elected as a MC member of the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP, 2001-2005).

In his research Dietmar Samulski addressed key issues of sports: performance, health, and quality of life, and this was done carefully with respect to both, theoretical foundation and applied orientation. Coaching in sports and particularly mental training with regard to various sports and different areas of sports, starting from physical education up to international elite sports were of special interest to him. His focus was on topics, including motivation, communication, stress, overtraining, burn out of athletes and coaches, mental training and, last but not least, the interrelation between physical activity and quality of life. As a consequence of both his outstanding scientific and broad sporting expertise, Dietmar Samulski was an eagerly requested speaker and invited lecturer in national and international conferences. His impressive scope of interests and expertise particularly shaped the large body of

oeuvres of about 150 publications in four different languages (German, English, Spanish, and particularly Portuguese), including 16 books. The text-book “Psicologia do esporte: conceitos e novas perspectivas”, second edition printed in 2009, became a standard reference work of sport psychology not only in Brazil. A further book concerning a topic that he regarded as highly important, “Superation of Limits: The Paralympic Athletes” and some other contributions, he was not able to bring to completion.

His broad scientific perspective provided the solid basis of a highly successful 30 years of applied sport psychology work on different performance levels and different types of sports, such as volleyball, handball, soccer, swimming, judo, cycling and particularly tennis, which attracted a considerable amount of attention. He placed emphasis on the psychological preparation of the Brazilian women’s national volleyball team (1993-1994) and handball team (1997), the soccer team of the well-known Cruzeiro Esporte Clube in Belo Horizonte (1996). Most notably are his appointments as sport psychologist of the Brazilian delegation at various outstanding sports events: Panamerican and Para-Panamerican Games in Rio (Brazil, 2007), Panamerican Games in Guadalajara (Mexico, 2011), Olympic Games in Athens (Greece, 2004) and Paralympics in Sydney (Australia, 2000), Athens (2004) and Beijing (China, 2008). His originally planned involvement and presence at the Olympic Games in London (2012) had to be restricted to the psychological preparation of athletes on the eve of the games.

Sport for him was not only a subject that aroused his passionate interest, to be scientifically dealt with and implemented into practice. In its active pursuit, for him it was always and up to the last his elixir of life, as he put it, a ray of hope in his own “struggle for survival”.

Dietmar Samulski was more than just a well known expert whose tireless, disciplined and performance-ambitious commitment rendered

his work so highly successful. He was known to be man full of ideas, vigour, creative power, optimism, spontaneous helpfulness, warm-hearted hospitality and an inspiring joy of life with an incomparable sense for the humorous and occasionally “crazy” aspects of life.

As a scientist, Dietmar Samulski stimulated and played a decisive role in the development and institutionalization of sport psychology in Brazil. Already early in life he was drawn to the Iberoamerican culture, mentality and way of life, which made him, and this was how he liked to regard himself, “half a Brazilian”. It was always a heart-warming pleasure to share time with him and always of profit to work together and have discussions with him about sport psychology and sport in general.

One of his last projects deserves special mention, because it characterizes his personal life situation and life attitude beyond the far-reaching practical implications of the work itself. In April 2012, he reported with great enthusiasm the compilation of a “Manual for the Improvement of Quality of Life for Cancer Patients” with practical advice for developing a positive and active attitude towards life. It was planned to underpin each part of advice by corresponding scientific research. The first practical step, a widely disseminated informa-

tion brochure, he was able to realize in cooperation with his surgeon.

Due to the progression of the disease, Dietmar Samulski was forced to prematurely leave his university teaching on August 8, 2011. His retirement was honoured with an official leaving ceremony on a large scale on October 7, 2011. However, he kept in close contact with his former assistants and went on in scientific and sport activities yet. On December 1, 2012, though, his power was too much consumed to further sustain his life maxim of “work-life-family-balance” as he had called it.

Sport psychology, sport science, and sports are losing a highly esteemed colleague, scientific mentor and psychological adviser in sports practice on both, the national and international level. He will be missed as an irreplaceable good friend by many of us and especially his close companions. In grateful memory, our warmest sympathies go to his family, especially his wife Walkiria and his children, Gabi, Thore and Natalia.

Um grande abraço, Dietmar ...

*Dieter Hackfort and Jürgen R. Nitsch*