

Nicholas O'Leary The longest serving

Eurocamp coach



A developing camp BUT the INTENSITY remains the same!

The date was 31st July 1998. The first Eurocamp in Barrow-in-Furness had just finished. The Hoops Centre was still a building site: workmen were still busy around the centre and cement mixers were still turning. As a first-year hired coach I was sitting outside the centre reflecting on the last five days. I had coached on numerous (residential) camps previously but not encountered anything like this camp and it's Camp Director – Dr. Laszlo Nemeth.

The camp coaches, administrative staff and players were made aware in no uncertain terms by Dr Nemeth what was required of them. Coaches were informed of the need to ensure players were to be physically active throughout the majority of the one hour coaching sessions. Fitness was an important factor in sessions and was to be rigorously enforced. Nobody who was there will forget the first 'conscripts' being led outside on the first day to the grassed area for a two hour fitness session – a basketball was nowhere to be seen! Coaches were expected to teach for one hour – a contrast to most United Kingdom camps which were and still are based on the American model of short coaching stations. I enjoyed being able to go into greater depth when teaching. I also

appreciated that while I was expected to put maximum effort into my teaching, I was only expected to teach two or three sessions a day rather than the grind of numerous short coaching stations. Quality rather than quantity appeared to be the order of the day.

Fifteen years later I stand proudly as the only first-year hired coach still standing! The camp has certainly changed. Coaches no longer sleep in the Tower Block; the food has improved; sleeping arrangements for players is superior; the number and quality of courts has increased; the Chris Smith publicity machine via Facebook has aided recruitment and the video and presentation night now has the stage it deserves. Whisper it quietly but perhaps even Laszlo has 'softened' a touch with the granting of a final night disco! However, these are all secondary factors in making a teaching/coaching environment successful. What has not changed in this ever developing and expanding camp is the philosophy underpinning the instruction provided. Shout it loudly but for fifteen years, the intensity has, and continues to remain the same!

Nick O'Leary