

Xavier Pascual Fuertes, Professor Honoris Causa of the Babeş-Bolyai University

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On Thursday, June 22nd, the Aula Magna of the Babeş-Bolyai University hosted the ceremony of awarding the title of *Professor Honoris Causa* to Professor Dr. **Xavier Pascual Fuertes** from the Instituto Nacional de Educación Física de Cataluña, Universitat de Barcelona.

In the laudation presented on the above mentioned occasion, the Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Associate Professor Dr. Leon Gomboş, said: "It is a great honor for me to present before you this laudation on the occasion of awarding the title of Professor Honoris Causa to Professor Dr. Xavier Pascual Fuertes, who stands today before us as:

- Professor Dr. at the University in Barcelona, National Institute of Physical Education from Cataluña.
- Main coach of the most titled handball team in the world, FC Barcelona, holding nine Champions League titles, the last two won under the guidance of Mr. Xavier Pascual Fuertes.
- Coach of the Romanian male handball team and at the same time coordinator of all male national teams.

Xavier Pascual Fuertes confessed with gratitude that when he decided to become a handball coach he asked himself "Who plays this sport best in the entire world? The Romanians!" Respectfully he said he had been studying the books and papers of the great Romanian trainers, which represented the cornerstone of his future career in coaching.

In addition, he expressed in a vivid, painful, nonetheless polite way of saying a cruel, but not to be contested reality: "Unfortunately your trophies and books are in black and white. Turn them into color yet again!"

Who is Xavier Pascual Fuertes?

Born on March 8th 1968 in Barcelona, he began his handball activity at the age of 9 during primary school, and ever since his life has been dependent on this sport. He evolved as a player of the children and junior teams of the FC Barcelona club; the step into senior playing came naturally; his sporting activity reached the climax when winning the title of European champion during the 1990-1991 season.

In 1991, he left the team of Barcelona, playing for a couple of teams in the Premier League of Spanish handball, combining his activity as a professional player with his professional and academic education.

In 1995, he successfully graduated from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of the University of Vigo, and during the following ten years, he was deeply concerned with continuous training, completing six postgraduate courses and nine courses organized by different sport federations in Spain.

Also in 1995, he received the highest coach category of the Spanish Handball Federation and one year later, he became an Expert Master in physical education and sport. Since 2006, he has been part of the national coach school of the Spanish Handball Federation as a professor.

In 2008 he became Doctor in Sciences of Physical Activity and Sport, a title awarded by the University of Vigo.

After ending his career as a professional player in 2005, his knowledge and competences, as well as his academic activity, which he started very early, did not go unnoticed and he was co-opted in the organizational chart of the FC Barcelona Club, first as a goalkeeper coach, then as a person responsible for the Academy of the Catalan Club, then as secondary coach; in February 2009, he was appointed main coach, a function which he still holds today.

In 2014, he became the coordinator of the Department of Sports Theory at the University of Barcelona and, the same year, he became a collaborator of the European Handball Federation for Master Coach courses.

In June 2016, he accepted the position of coach of the National Romanian team alongside the position of coach at FC Barcelona, being recommended by his impressive title list; as a trainer he won no less than 37 trophies, the most important of which are:

- 2 Champions League titles (European Champions Cup)
- 2 Golden League titles (Club World Championships)
- 7 Spanish Champion titles
- 7 Asobal Cups (Spanish Cup)
- 7 Copas del Rei (Kings Cup)
- 6 Spanish Super Cups
- 7 Catalanian Cups.

Together with Alfred Gislason, coach of the THV Kiel team, he participated in 6 editions of the Final Four of the 8, which took place in the current format of the Champions League; they are the only coaches in the world who achieved this performance.

Mr. Xavier Pascual Fuertes' collaboration with the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of the Babeş-Bolyai University began in 2016, when he accepted the position of coach of the Romanian national handball team, and was especially rich and productive.

When we suggested this collaboration he accepted it unconditionally, as he was more than thrilled about what was going to happen. He confessed to me that alongside the profession as a coach, his greatest satisfaction in life came from having the possibility to share his knowledge and experience with the students.

Thus, he responded promptly whenever we asked him to meet with our students and give lectures at our faculty.

The availability and courtesy of Mr. Xavier Pascual Fuertes towards us always came along with his characteristic modesty and discretion; he did not want the press to take part in these meetings and lectures, as he centered his entire energy on the activity with the students.

The opportunity for our students, especially those attending the study program of Sport and Motor Performance, future coaches in different sport branches, to learn the kinks of the profession from one of the greatest personalities in the world of handball was a highly useful, but also pleasant and relaxing experience.

Professor Fuertes' competence, tactfulness and special charm made the activities with the students end with a standing ovation.

Professor Fuertes' qualities: reliability, thoroughness, continuous thirst for knowledge and self-improvement, extraordinary work capacity, turned him into a model worth following for our students, but I dare say, also for us members of the teaching staff working in sports performance.

I was promised that no matter how long his collaboration with the Romanian Handball Federation will last, our academic collaboration would be long term, which makes us tremendously happy.

During the very short time period spent in Romania, thanks to his deep skills, Professor Xavier Pascual Fuertes has been able to get a very precise picture of and diagnose Romanian professional sport and handball in particular, which unfortunately, at least as far as the male handball game is concerned, is in deep suffering.

It is known that for eliminating this suffering we need a proper diagnosis, meant to raise awareness and shoulder the responsibility regarding the state of professional handball in Romania, as this represents the first step to healing and recovery.

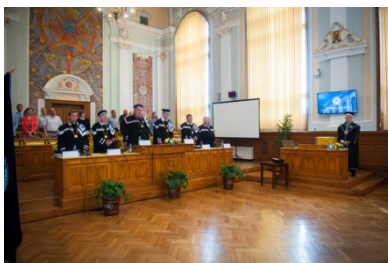
At the beginning of this laudation, I presented Professor Xavier Pascual Fuertes in his triple role...please allow me now, at the end of my speech, to add a fourth role, the one that I am most fond of: his role as a colleague, a member of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, and a member of the academic staff of the Babeş-Bolyai University, as we are convinced that Xavier Pascual Fuertes' work as a professor, coach and scientist absolutely justifies his receiving the title of Professor Honoris Causa of our University, which is honored by the presence of such a personality within its ranks.”

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Leon Gomboş

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Group picture, UBB building



Presidium: Prorector - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cristian Marius Litan, Prorector - Prof. Dr. Mihaela Luţaş, President of the UBB Senate - Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Chirilă, Prorector - Prof. Dr. Flaviu Călin Rus, Prorector - Prof. Dr. Dan Lazăr, Dean of FEFS - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Leon Gomboş



Singing the anthem



Awarding of the PHC diploma



Presentation of the speech in the Aula Magna of UBB