INTRODUCTION

Considering the fact that knowing how to swim is not only a reflection of the achieved level of civilization of an individual, but also of society as a whole, in this day and age knowing how to swim is not only the need of every human being, but also a part of his culture of living. This is the reason why today swimming teaching programs represent an imperative in every civilized society (Findak, 2006). Numerous studies have led us to the conclusion that the importance of swimming is increasing each day. Knowing how to swim is the most important component of the fight against a drowning. People use swimming as a means of recreation, for purposes of corrective gymnastics and sport. One of the water sports also is the synchronized swimming.

Synchronized swimming is a sport which contains elements of swimming, diving, ballet and sports gymnastics (Dimitrova (Димитрова), 1998). The requirements from a synchronized swimmer are primarily how to learn all the swimming techniques, and in addition to her knowledge of swimming, to be in possession of elasticity, grace, rhythm and expressiveness.

For synchronized swimmers it is important that they are in control of the technique elements, as well as in possession of suitable motor qualities such as flexibility, strength, coordination and endurance (Kocić, Aleksic, & Tošić (Коцић, Алексић, & Тошић), 2009).

As a part of the synchronized swimming club “Sirene” (Mermaids) in Nis, a swim school called the “Mala sirena” (the Little Mermaid) has been working for nine full years. The program of the school is varied and includes using both land and water drills in the teaching process. As a part of the training that takes place in the water, the following programs are realized: non-swimmer training and training which allows the girls to acquire the basic concepts of synchronized swimming. The first step in learning how to swim is the most important one and is the building block for further improvement. During this initial floating and movement in a new medium without the aid of solid ground, both visual and temperature sensations are important. As in the case of other sports activities, the first step and the learning
process involving the basic motor structures of swimming is organized under the guidance of a professional teacher. It is not necessary to emphasize that the first approach is the one opted for most often, since, frequently, incorrectly learned and acquired motor habits require more time to correct than it took to teach and learn them properly (Volčanšek, 2000). Every correct type of knowledge of swimming enables us to properly make use of this activity with all its advantages.

The subject matter of this paper is to determine whether our nine-year experience has lead to good results in acquiring swimming skills and basic synchronized swimming techniques. In addition, by analyzing the work of this school we might be able to contribute new knowledge to the organization and realization of this type of activity within sports such as synchronized swimming.

The aim of the paper is to present the methodological approach which is used in the “Mala sirena” swim school.

METHODS

The method is based on the assumption that the means used to create top synchronized swimmers make up an integral process which begins with learning how to swim, and ends with the cessation of any active participation in synchronized swimming competitions. The paper will outline the developmental path from being a female non-swimmer toward a competitor in synchronized swimming discipline. The work of the school is based on the age and level of the swimmers.

The “Mala sirena” swimming school lasted for 20 to 30 hours. One hour in the swim school lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. The activities which are part of the school program are realized every work day. The school begins with an initial evaluation of the knowledge of swimming of each of the members, after which they are classified into homogenous groups.

The beginning of the training is based on water games, learning the proper breathing technique, keeping one’s eyes open in the water, the gliding phase, hand movements, leg movements, and coordination for each of the techniques. The teaching elements consist of improving all of the swimming techniques: butterfly, the backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, dive race starts and turns and diving techniques. The aim is to enable most of the young girls to learn how to swim and to select and guide some of them into the world of synchronized swimming. The young girls are introduced to various combinations of swimming

Table 1. The plan and program of the non-swimmers training on the basis of 20 hours of training

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techniques (in synchronized swimming we use swimming techniques as part of the routines). Since the swimming activity contributes to the development of basic motor skills and the increase of the functional abilities of the girls, and in addition has a positive influence on their growth and development, it is necessary to use the acquisition of swimming knowledge and swimming activity in the further aims to achieve sports success (Volčanšek, 2000).

The training for the acquisition of the basic types of knowledge in synchronized swimming consists of a program which differs based on the activity contents. After overmastering the swimming techniques, we then move on toward learning of elementary positions and techniques in synchronized swimming (FINA handbook).

The basic positions can be: horizontal, vertical and a combination of the two. As part of the SSPS (the Serbian Synchronized Swimming Committee) there is a plan and an existing program of work which is aimed at acquiring the basic knowledge that all clubs require in order to give out the title of mermaid. The structure of movement is not simple considering the laws of hydrostatics, hydrodynamics and kinematics.

The study process and later the process of acquiring a certain technique in synchronized swimming demand a lot of time and efforts. During the acquisition of the technique one has to pay attention to the individual predispositions of the swimmer which will optimally contribute toward the formation of a certain style.

The levels for acquiring the title of mermaid are the following:

- **the Yellow Mermaid:** includes a 100 m swim, the back layout, the canoe, single ballet leg, a forward somersault tucked, the eggbeater and choreography.
- **the Orange Mermaid:** incorporates the performance of techniques such as the propeller, the splits, the ballet leg, the forward somersault, the position of the pelvis and choreography.
- **the Pink Mermaid:** includes a 100 m swim mixed stroke style, walkout front, the barracuda, a group formation of choice and choreography.

After passing the mermaid levels, the female swimmers gain the right to compete in competitions that have been scheduled by the SSPS.

The qualification tests for the mermaid levels are organized by the SSPS following a predetermined competition calendar. The female participants are evaluated by five judges by means of points ranging from 0 to 10 using 0,1 (a tenth) of a point. The greatest and the smallest grade are eliminated and the average grade from the three judges is then multiplied by the coefficient of the level of difficulty of the particular technique (Tošić, Kocić, & Andrejić, 2009).

For each mermaid there is a minimum required number of points in order for the female swimmer to try and pass the test for the next level (1. the Yellow Mermaid – a minimum of 41 points; 2. the Orange Mermaid – a minimum of 51 points; 3. the Pink Mermaid – a minimum of 55 points).

The road from a non-swimmer to a synchronized swimmer takes a few months up to two years and depends on the individual abilities of each female swimmer, the presence and effort she involves into the training and the psychological condition of the female swimmer during the test itself.

**INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION**

Synchronized swimming belongs to the group of sports with an aesthetic-coordinated character and represents a group of complex motor movements and motions both as a part of land and water drills (both on and underneath the surface). This sport demands of the female swimmers to have the necessary strength and skills, grace and beauty, and a sense for the timely connection between the music and the movement (Grey, 1993,). Thanks to the differences between training devices (choreography, gymnastics, the preparation regarding swimming and music), a sport such as synchronized swimming enables a complete harmonic and multifaceted development. Considering the achieved results which were monitored during a period of nine years during which the school has been working, and which were manifested by means of a great number of successful competitors in synchronized swimming both at the local and international level, we can say that the cited plan and program of the “Mala sirena” swimming school has proven that it can be used in the practice. If we want to make progress in sports such as synchronized swimming, it is necessary to make a connection between learning how to swim and the school of synchronized swimming sport. The entire process should be organized as a single integral whole which is a part of the process of the upbringing and training top synchronized swimmers.

**REFERENCES**


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3Клуб за синхронизирано и уметничко пливање “Сирена”, Ниш, Србија

Апстракт

Во составот на клубот за синхронизирано и уметничко пливање “Сирена” во Ниш, веќе полни девет години работи школа за обука на непливачи „Мала сирена“. Програмата на школата е разновидна и опфаќа девојчиња кои вежбат на суво и на вода. Во рамките на обуката на вежбите на вода се реализира програма за обука на непливачи и за стекнување основни знаења за синхронизирано пливање. Програмата за обука на непливачи се однесува на учење елементи за сите четири пливачки техники, скокови и завртувања. Таа се засновува и изведува низ детски игри и развивање на позитивен став кон водата. Програмата за стекнување на основни знаења за синхронизираното пливање, опфаќа учење на основните положби и елементи на синхронизираното пливање за стекнување на звања.

Ключни зборови: девојчиња пливачи, пливачки техники, монторни квалификацији, пливачка школа, звања во синхронизирано пливање

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