

QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH ON REASONS FOR SPORTS ORIENTATION IN CANOE-KAYAK SPRINT

(Preliminary communication)

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Abstract

To study the problems of selection in canoe-kayak sprint a direct single survey of the elite athletes in canoeing was organized. We interviewed 32 medalists from the Olympic Games, World and European championships (22 men and 10 women). The majority of subjects were current and competitors of the Bulgarian national team. For the study of individual sports biographies questions were answered also by the Hungarian, Turkish and Serbian national competitors. The average age of subjects to start activities with canoeing was 12.3 years. Analysing the survey it was found that 59.4% of subjects before choosing canoeing had practiced one or more sports. We found that 59.4% of subject had some relatives in sport. Previous driving experience is an important factor for the rapid progression of these athletes in canoeing. According to the subjects first three negative factors for the development of the sport selection are: lack of financial resources, the reluctance of children to engage in sports and the lack of motivation of the coaches. They also cited lowered criteria for selection, the lack of breeders, and other factors. The complexity of selection in canoeing increases by a large number of specific factors: the big distance to reach rowing facilities, shortage of quality children inventory, the risk of colds. Consequently, it is difficult for canoe-kayak to compete with other sports in the selection.

Keywords: *elite athletes in canoeing, men, women, sport selection, training process, biographic data, sports traditions, family traditions, individual sports achievements, optimal age to start canoeing and kayaking*

INTRODUCTION

One of the trends in the development of the modern canoe-kayak sport is a constant decrease in age limit of the ones involved. In this regard, the role of parents, family environment and friends is of great importance for the initial orientation of the youths towards the sport. Typical for the modern sport are also the early involvement of the competitors in the elite sport and high requirements for the scope and intensity of the training load. A majority of the athletes leave their families too early or spend some limited time with them. The analysis of the development and fulfilment of the personality in sport requires taking into consideration the role and various aspects of interaction with the social environment.

The leading selection criteria appear to be indexes of the body shape (Kozhokaru (Кожокару), 1973; Drachevskiy (Драчевский), 1988; Markov (Марков) 1983; Sozin (Созин), 1984; Ackland, Org, Kerr, & Ridge, 2003; Michael, 2008). Without denying this factor, we tried to expand the range of the issues examined by studying also the individual

biographic data, sports and family traditions, any experience from the previous sports training and the dynamics of the individual sports achievements.

METHODS

To study the problems of selection in canoe-kayak, we organized a single survey administering a direct questionnaire to some elite competitors in canoe-kayak. We interviewed 32 medal winners in the Olympic Games, World and European Championships (22 men and 10 women). The majority of subjects were current and competitors of the Bulgarian national team. To study individual sports biographies, questions were also answered by the Hungarian, Turkish and Serbian national competitors. The questionnaire included open and closed questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A milestone in the organization of the selection is the orientation towards the optimal age to start canoe-kayak activities. The average age we found in the subjects about their start in canoe-kayak activities was

12.3 years old. The results showed that a majority started practicing canoe-kayak at the age of 10 (21.9 %), 11 (6.3 %), 12 (12.5 %), at the age of 13 (21.9 %), at the age of 14 (28.1 %); three subjects started at 9, 16 and 22, respectively.

Analyzing questionnaire results 37.5% of the elite competitors said they had heard from their family about canoe-kayak, 53.1 % - from their friends and 9.4 % - from the media.

Questionnaire results showed, that 71.9 % of the subjects won their first medal from an international competition at the age of 16–18 Only 12.5 % won their first medal from in the international regatta within the age interval of 23–26 and 15.6 % won their first big distinction at the age of 19–23. The biggest share (43.8 %) of the subjects achieved their biggest sports success in the early age of 16–18 Only 25 % of the subjects achieved their biggest sports success in the ages under 23. Just about 28.1 % of the competitors achieved their sports zenith between 23 and 26 .

We wanted to determine if any previous motor training had important significance as a precondition for the subsequent sports improvement. Analysis of the questionnaire-results shows that 59.4% of the persons interviewed had practiced one or more sports before choosing the canoe-kayak. No less than 12.5 % had practiced track-and-field athletics, 9.4 % court tennis and 15.6 % soccer. Analysis of the questionnaire-results also shows that 15.6 % of the subjects had trained swimming before starting to practice canoe-kayak. Only 3.1 % of the athletes had been engaged in gymnastics, kickboxing and water polo. The rest of 40.6 % of the competitors had not practiced any other sports before related to the canoe-kayak.

It is interesting to see the influence of the family on the choice of these athletes for canoe-kayak sprint, as shown in Table 1.

We found, that 59.4% of the subjects had some relatives involved in sports. Besides, a significant number of the athletes were brought up in families, where the parents practiced canoe-kayak sport (40.6 %), fathers being the biggest percentage (18.8 %), and relatively smaller share – mothers (12.5 %), brothers and sisters (9.4 %). We may draw the conclusion, that the attention of the coaches should be directed to attract to the sport children, brothers and sisters of the athletes, who are being trained or have been trained by them. A majority of the subjects started practicing canoe-kayak at their

father's advice (28 %) at the onset less influence having mothers (9.4 %) or brothers (3.1 %). The family had no influence on the choice of canoe-kayak in a majority of the subjects (59.4 %).

A minority of the subjects (21.9 %) had become national champions or medal winners in other kinds of sports before they started canoe-kayak activities. Only two of the female competitors interviewed had won medals in the international tournaments in sports they had practiced before starting canoe-kayak activities.

It is obvious that previous motor experience and development of the physical skills appear to be an important factor for the rapid progress of these athletes in canoe-kayak. We may suggest that the positive influence of the previous training on the subsequent engagements in canoe-kayak is not equal for various kinds of sports. From this position, we may distinguish track-and-field athletics and swimming significantly enrich motor experience, which forms coordination habits important for the competitors in canoe-kayak enhancing performance of rowing movements, and creates a basis for the general physical skills (strength, speed, endurance).

Analyzing questionnaire results it was revealed that 71.9 % of the interviewed high-class competitors in canoe-kayak had the ambition to become champions in international competitions, 15.6 % wanted to win medals in international competitions. One of the Olympic female medal winners answered that her ambitions was to win an Olympic medal when started training. The leading motto for the female Olympic multiple champion N. Ya. has been "always win the competition", and for one of the Bulgarian national male competitors in kayaking leading thought has been "striving to win". Nowadays, 83 % of the subjects are systematically practicing or are working as coaches in canoe-kayak.

The results from the questionnaire showed, that 46.9 % of the competitors interviewed had accidentally met their coach in canoe-kayak, while for 53.1 % of the subjects the meeting was not by accidental (Tab.2).

More than one third of the athletes (40.6 %) met their sports trainer at school, a minority of the athletes interviewed (34.4 %) met their coach at the rowing base, 9.4 % – at home and 15.6 % at some other places. A big percentage (31, 2 %) of the subjects prefers their coach to be within the age interval of 41–50. The same number of subjects (31.2 %) prefers the personal coach to be of the age of 31–40. Just about 18.8 % prefer

Table 1. Influence of the family on the orientation towards rowing in canoe-kayak sprint

<i>Influence</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
The family had to influenced	59.4%
Father	28.0%
Mother	9.4%
Brothers	3.1%

Table 2. Place of the first meeting with the sports trainer

<i>Place</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Another place	9.4%
At home	15.6%
At school	40.6%
At rowing base	34.4%

young coaches under 30 and only 6.3 % of the persons interviewed prefer to be trained by sports trainers with great experience and within the age interval of 51–60 and. 9, 4 % of the subjects think that the age of their coach.

Results of the questionnaire showed, that 62.5 % of the competitors interviewed were actively and systematically practicing, and 37.5 % gave up active sports activity. 6.3 % of the persons interviewed had stopped their activity in sports competition due to a trauma, 9.4 % due to age, 6.3 % – due to financial reasons, lack of interests in the 10 000 m distance or family reasons. A majority of the subjects (68.8 %) wants to compete in regattas for veterans after the termination of their active participation in sports competitions, 25% do not want to compete anymore, and 6.2 % have not decided yet. Only 34.4 % of the subjects think that the ones engaged in canoe-kayak must not pay membership fees, while the rest of 65.6 % points out that the fee must range from 10 to 50 BGN per month.

The large relative share (68.8%) of the subjects, who find it necessary to change the selection system of the athletes in canoe-kayak in Bulgaria, is a general expression of the necessity to optimize the national concept for the organizational and management structure and the functional foundations of the children's and youth sports as a condition for the development of other elements of this system.

Only 9.3% think that advertising is necessary which shows that the majority of the former and present elite competitors do not realize the importance of good management and marketing to attract more children to the systematic sports activities.

According to the competitors interviewed, the first three negative factors for the development of sports selection are: lack of financial recourses, reluctance of the children to engage in sports and lack of motivation among the coaches. After them lowered selection criteria ensued, lack of selectors and other factors.

A complexity of the selection in canoe-kayak sprint is increased by a large number of specific factors: remoteness of the rowing bases, insufficient quantity of qualitative rowing equipment for children, risk of colds. Therefore, it is difficult for the canoe-kayak sprint to compete with other sports in the selection of talented children.

Methodical provision of the training process in childhood and teenage age as a condition for the deve-

lopment of sports achievements is one of the main problems in the system of the sports training in canoe-kayak sprint.

Everything mentioned above is an additional reason for the selection and initial training in canoe-kayak sprint to become subjects of special attention by the experts.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the results in our study we reached following conclusions:

1. It was found that an optimal age to start canoeing and kayaking activities may be the age of 12.
2. Factors promoting and introducing canoeing appear to be friendly environment, family and the media.
3. As optimal for achieving the first high sports achievements in canoe was set at the age of 16-18.
4. Practicing other sports before canoe-kayak is natural, but not necessary a condition for subsequent successful sports development.
5. Personal motivation to achieve top sports results and win is a leading psychological factor for their subsequent implementation.
6. Participating in the regattas for veterans after the termination of their active sports career is a logical and desirable fact for the medalist in canoe-kayak sprint.

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