

RUGBY SPORT IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Notes

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Abstract

An up-to-date approach with the introduction of non-traditional sports, such as rugby, is an innovation that arouses interest among students according to their preferences and motor abilities. The new non-traditional sports fill the emotional gap in the attitude of students toward conventional physical education activities. Acquaintance with the unconventional always carries a positive emotional charge. This, combined with active sports–competitive activity, helps to a greater extent to fulfill the main goals of physical education in higher schools. A retrospective of the sport of rugby in higher education institutions in Bulgaria as part of the educational system has been made. The attitude of students to non-traditional sports and their popularity has also been studied.

Keywords: *non-traditional sports, rugby, physical education, racing sports, students*

INTRODUCTION

The radical changes in the social and political life of the country had an impact on the attitude of students toward the content of the educational process – preferring special sports training and a desire to engage in sports and competitive activities. Preferences for individual sports have changed, with increased interest in sports, which are a product of countries with developed economies and established educational systems (Nedkova (Недкова), 2013).

Rugby is closely linked to the educational system. Rugby School, located in the city of Rugby, is considered one of the most elite schools in England. The contribution of this school, where the modern sport of rugby was born, to the English Empire as a way of preparation is still used today, with many Higher Schools copying the model „Rugby“ (Peeva (Пеева), 2010).

The same author, together with N. Kolev, conducted a study at Todor Kableshkov University of Transport in the period from October 2002 to June 2003, tracking the dynamics in the development of basic physical qualities of students who start playing rugby when entering the university (Peeva & Kolev (Пеева & Колев), 2005).

M. Nedkova together with D. Peeva and N. Gocheva in their 2019 paper present data on female students engaged with rugby, where there is a positive increase in all indicators of physical capacity. The effectiveness of these activities is considered and participation in them leads to constructive physical exertion. The physical development of students is characterized by a small variability of anthropometric indicators. The results of the study show that the implementation and practice of non-traditional sports in Higher Schools, in parallel with the traditional ones, will expand the content and impact effect in the training process under the PhES (Nedkova, Peeva, Gocheva (Недкова, Пеева & Гочева), 2019).

In specialized Bulgarian literature, there are almost no professionally oriented Sports programs for universities, aimed at

the development of the leading physical qualities and motor skills needed by specialists in their immediate practice. The publications are singular, and the authors adhere to approximately the same opinion regarding their preparation; (Bozhkova (Божкова), 2011; (Dyakova & Petkov (Дякова & Петков), 2011; (Bozhkova), 2012; (Bozhova & Dyakova), 2011).

According to R. Kostadinov, one of the main tasks of the University's teaching staff is the improvement of learning processes with new approaches, consistent with the growing opportunities and requirements for the quality of the higher entity. On one hand, the goal is to align it with the world standards of teaching and on the other – to make it more interesting and accessible to students. This provokes teachers to look for new ways to increase the overall training process for physical and sports education in universities (Kostadinov (Костадинов), 2017).

The implementation and practice of non-traditional sports in higher education institutions, in parallel with the traditional ones, expand the content and impact effect in the educational and training process of physical education and sports, effectively develops voluntarily the physical qualities desired by students with new sports to achieve a better level of motor fitness (Nedkova (Недкова), 2016).

This paper aims to trace the modern development of Rugby sport as an innovation in the educational system and to study the opinion of students participating in physical education and sports classes at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ and the Medical University – Sofia for their attitude towards new and non-traditional sports. By enriching the experience and introducing new sports in the educational system, we can see the results of their implementation in the teaching and organization of various sports forms of physical activities.

To achieve this goal, we set ourselves the following **tasks:**

1. Study the problem in paper and online sources.

2. Retrospective of university rugby game in Bulgaria.
3. Establishing the attitude of students towards rugby sport and introducing novelties in physical and sports education.
4. Analysis of the obtained results.

The object of study is the modern development of rugby sport in high schools. The subject of the study is the indicators (answers) of the respondents about the novelties, innovations, and their knowledge of rugby sport. The subject of study is the students participating in Sports classes at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

METHODS

For the objectives and purposes of this study, a study was made from personal archives and notes of specialists and activists in this sport. A questionnaire with 20 points was created, but four of them are related to the attitude of students toward non-traditional sports in the educational system and to rugby sport. It was distributed through Google Forms among 200 students from the Medical University – Sofia and Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sports Club Rugby at NSA was established in March 1959. This is the first club to officially win a rugby competition in Bulgaria in 1959 and Sofia city championships. In 1985 the new major „Rugby“ was introduced at the Department of Football and Tennis at the HIPhE, and in the following 1986, the team was restored. The HIPhE (NSA) rugby team is multiple winners of medals from the National Rugby Championships and RC „NSA“ is a multiple state champion and winner of the Cup of Bulgaria in the new millennium for men and women. Following the idea of RC „NSA“ established the international rugby tournament "Sofia Sevens" in 1994. With this tournament, RC „NSA“ laid the foundations of rugby-7 in Bulgaria. The Rugby 7 tournament is one of the oldest in Europe and has involved over 70 foreign teams of the highest level. RC is a multiple tournament winner and a twenty-time Rugby-7 champion for men and women.

Founders and members of RC „NSA“ Management Board in 1992 were Nikolay Kolev – President, Trifon Kostadinov, Stoyan Mihaylov, Dimitar Manolov, and Ivan Ivanov. In 1999 RC „NSA“ began the development of this sport with girls and women and became a major pillar for the development of women's rugby in our country. In 2006 the men's and women's RC „NSA“ ensembles participated in the World Student Championship in Rome (Italy). In 2008, the men's rugby-7 team again took part in the World Student Championship – Córdoba (Spain). In 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 the men's representative team of RC "NSA" competed in the European Cup of Champions. Prestigious rankings and participations: 3rd place at the European University Championships – Montpellier (France), 2002; 11th place at the World Student Championships – Rome (Italy), 2006; 11th place at the World Student Championships – Córdoba (Spain), 2008; European Champions Club League – Moscow: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 Best ranking – 10th place.

The „Trakia University“ in Stara Zagora introduced rugby sport in its educational program in the 2010–2011 school year with head coach Nela Gocheva. She managed to create the first women's rugby team at the university. The results came immediately with the team's first participation in the National Rugby-7 Championships, women, where the team ranked 4th. On 5-6 May 2012 the women's rugby team of Trakia University – St. Kliment Ohridski. took part in the International Rugby Tournament Sofia-7, where they ranked 4th. That same year Varna held the National Championships in rugby-7 women, where the same team took 4th place again. The following year, on May 4, the National Rugby-7 Women's Championships were held in Sofia, where the team of Trakia University ranked 3rd and participated in a tournament for the „Rector's Cup of NSA „Vasil Levski“, where it won bronze medals and a bronze cup of the Rector. In 2013 in Sofia, they took 5th place in the sixth European Rugby Student Championship-7.

At the National Rugby-7 Women's Championships in Sofia in 2014, Nela Gocheva's team took 3rd place. At the same championships in 2015, they ranked 2nd. This is the best ranking of the girls from Trakia University – St. Kliment Ohridski for the five-year history of the rugby team.

The Bulgarian Cup in rugby-7 women was held in Sofia on 21.11.2015, where the team ranked 3rd. In 2016 Ihtiman won 2nd place in their participation in the tournament Cup of Bulgaria in rugby-7 women in Plovdiv. Sofia ranked 4th. 2017 is not one of the most successful for the women's rugby team of Trakia University – St. Kliment Ohridski. They took 5th place in the Women's National Championships in Rugby-7, and Bulgaria Rugby-7 Cup, women. On 19.05.2018, the National Rugby-7 Women's Championships was held, where they ranked 5th, and on 16.11.2018 in Rugby-7- Sofia, they took second place again after participating in the National Rugby Championship-7, women. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Thracian University – St. Kliment Ohridski founded a men's rugby team. On 21.11.2019 the National Student Rugby-7 Championships for men and women were held in Sofia. The women's team ranked 2nd and the men's team ranked 3rd. This is the first participation of male students from Trakian University. The following year, at the same championship, the women's team ranked 2nd and the men's team ranked 3rd. 2021 is the most successful for the rugby teams of Trakia University, which participated in the National Student Rugby-7 Championships for men and women held in Sofia. Both teams ranked 2nd (Nedkova (Недкова), 2023b).

One of the innovators in the introduction of non-traditional sports is „Todor Kableshkov“ High School of Transport with teacher Diana Peeva. In 1998, by her initiative was established a Rugby Club at „Todor Kableshkov“ High School of Transport, which became the successor of the rugby section and the team of the Railway Institute, which was formed and took part in three state rugby-15 championships after 1986. They formed a rugby-7 men's team and participated in 2002 in the Rugby-7 National University Championship, where the High School of Transport team took third place. The next year they took third place again. With the renewal of the National University Rugby-7

Championship, the women's team of „Todor Kableshkov“ High School of Transport from 2018 to 2021 always won bronze medals.

One of the main pillars of student rugby sport is the Technical University – Gabrovo team. It was formed in 2002 by students at the Technical University with coach Mitko Mihov. In the first National University Rugby-7 Championship, the students from Gabrovo became the first student champion in rugby-7. The following year, they lost their title in the final to NSA students and won the silver medals. Silver medals have also been won in all other National University Rugby-7 Championships so far.

In analyzing many historical documents from the State Archives, the author of the film „In the Name of God Rugby“, journalist Vasil Varbanov, found documents showing that rugby exists as a sport at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" as early as 1932, but the traces disappeared a few years later. In the 2022-2023 school year, the sport of rugby was introduced at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" thanks to the initiative of Vasil Varbanov, a famous journalist, leading rugby player and an active fan of rugby sports. In the new school year, all students, boys and girls, and the university's lecturers get acquainted with the values and rules of the 2-century-old emphasized student sport. The Student Council welcomes the rugby idea with enthusiasm at Sofia University. At a meeting with Prof. Boryana Tumanova – Director of the Sports Department, the representatives of the Council were introduced to the new university rugby program by Vasil Varbanov, the coach Nikolay Krastev and Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova. Student representatives are committed to informing and promoting rugby sport in the university community. The management of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ gladly accepts the innovations in the educational processes of physical education and sport and wishes success in the new venture. On 6.10.2022, an official presentation of rugby sport was held by Vasil Varbanov, attended by many rugby players, lecturers and students from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". On October 10, 2022, the first rugby training of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ in its 134-year history, was where fully beginner students – boys and girls took part.

Rugby classes as part of the subject „Sport“ at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ are organized and led by Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova, and the training of the newly created rugby team is led by the graduated rugby coach and former national player Nikolay Krastev. Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova develops a methodology for initial training in rugby for students from Sofia University, which is tailored and consistent with the capabilities and physical capacity of the students. It is also coordinated with rugby specialists from NSA „Vasil Levski“. The

goal for the upcoming years is to form a student rugby team, women and men, at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, with which to participate in student competitions and tournaments in Bulgaria and abroad (Nedkova (Недкова), 2023b).

In parallel with the introduction of rugby sport in Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", again at the initiative of Vasil Varbanov, the same is also happening at New Bulgarian University. At the beginning of the academic year 2022–2023, Prof. Veselin Metodiev officially accepts rugby sports at New Bulgarian University. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of New Bulgarian University welcomes the new rugby program presented to students and teachers. The project manager is Chief Assist. Svetlozar Vasilev and the coach is Kostadin Debrenliev, who leads the practical activities. They work towards promoting rugby sport and the benefits of its introduction into the university's program. The journalist Vasil Varbanov, who is a collaborator of Chief Assist. Svetlozar Vassilev in this project and a longtime television rugby commentator, conducts the first hours of the theoretical course – an introduction to the history and traditions of world and Bulgarian rugby culture. On October 19, 2022, the first rugby training for beginner students – girls and boys – is held at the stadium of New Bulgarian University. The new rugby program was created for all students at New Bulgarian University, during all years of study and academic programs.

When following the development of student rugby sports in the country it should be emphasized that teams were held in several universities in the country. One of them is Shumen University „Konstantin Preslavski“. They, under the guidance of the national competitor Yavor Dragnev and with the assistance of the Department of Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports Prof. Nadezhda Yordanova, formed a rugby-7 team, which has official appearances, including participation in the European University Championship in Sofia with a ranking of 7th place (Nedkova (Недкова), 2023b).

We conducted an independent up-to-date survey during the summer semester of the academic year 2021/2022 in May and June with students from the Medical University – Sofia and Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". 200 students from 1st to 4th year who participated in physical education and sports classes at both universities were interviewed (Nedkova (Недкова), 2023a).

65% answered the question "Do you have information about the listed sports?", where non-traditional Bulgarian sports are listed, but some of the most popular worldwide: cricket, rugby, field hockey, and baseball, that there is a lack of information about the sport of „rugby“ (Figure 1.).

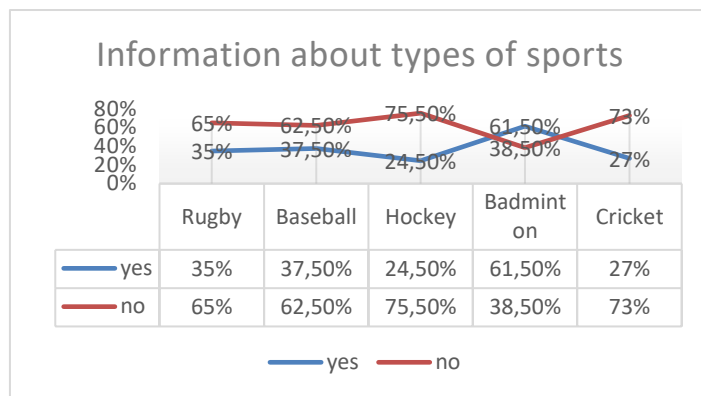


Figure 1. Information about types of sports

Of interest are the answers to the next question “Do you consider it necessary to introduce new sports in high schools”, especially after nearly two years of online training in the discipline of Physical Education and Sports, 45% of students are willing to

be introduced to new sports in the curricula in Physical Education and Sports at the university. The percentage of respondents (37%) who have no opinion on the matter is not small, and 18% give a negative answer (Figure 2.).

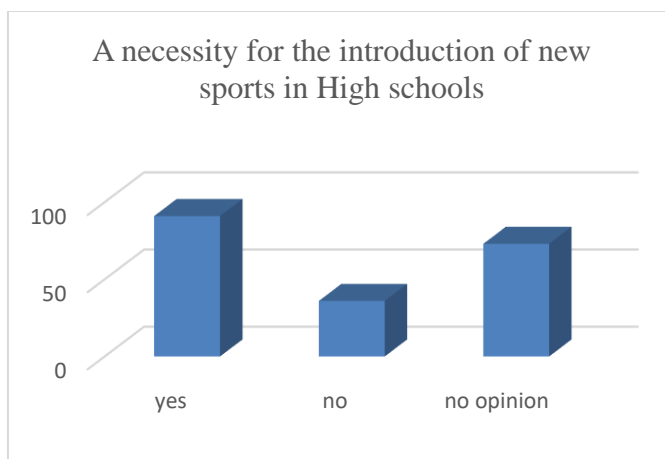


Figure 2. A necessity for the introduction of new sports in high schools

The answers to the question “What will attract you to practice the new sports in higher schools?” show that 31% of students know about the positive impact of exercise and believe that new sports will contribute to this, 29% note that the novelty

would attract them to practice a new sport. Close is the percentage (25%) betting on the emotional side and 15% see an opportunity for competitive activity by practicing non-traditional sports for Bulgaria (Figure 3.).

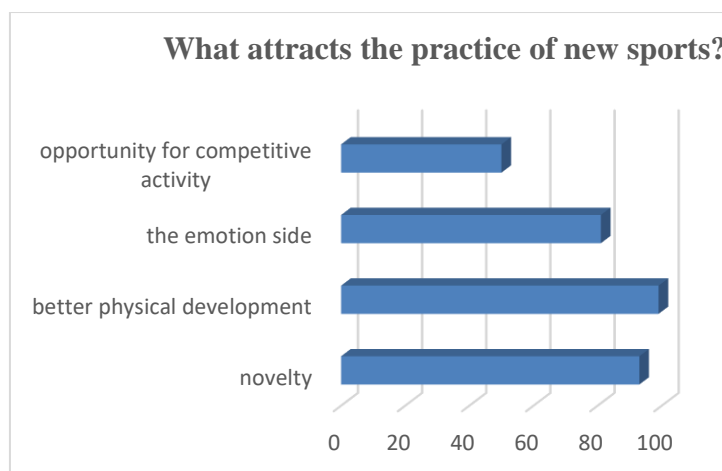


Figure 3. What attracts the practice of new sports?

Very interesting are the answers to the question “Which of the new sports would you attend in Physical Education and Sports classes?” In this regard, it is clear from the previous answers that students are open to new sports, but 28% of them answer that they would not choose any of the above. 35% would take part in badminton classes, 12% in baseball almost the same part 11% in cricket. A small percentage of 8% and 6% choose the sport of field hockey and rugby, respectively. The results of this question are logical, taking the data from the question about the information and knowledge that students have about the non-traditional sports presented to them (Figure 1.).

CONCLUSIONS

The interest in non-traditional sports and the effect of their activities direct our activities to a certain extent as sports specialists. News are frightening but also motivating. In this regard, it is necessary to offer attractive and desirable sports activities and initiatives that help maintain good health status and increase the psycho-physical capabilities of students. The generalizations and theoretical conclusions from the presented results as well as the opinion of other authors (Velkov, Kolev & Nekova (Велков, Колев & Недкова), 2012) using the crisis in the so-called traditional sports in Bulgaria will contribute to the modernization and adaptation of curricula and forms of education. This will lead to the search for innovative methods and means to increase motivation and opportunities to participate in sports activities. There is a great need for renovation and modernization of the organizational and management structure of student sports in Bulgaria. Consideration and acceptance of the experience in the management of modern national student organizations of EU countries.

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