

Київський Університет імені Бориса Грінченка

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University

№2 (4) 2020

Наукове електронне періодичне
видання

**СПОРТИВНА НАУКА ТА
ЗДОРОВ'Я ЛЮДИНИ**

Scientific E-Journal

**SPORT SCIENCE AND
HUMAN HEALTH**



ISSN 2664-2069 (online)

DOI: 10.28925/2664-2069.2020.1

UDK 796.03+615.8

ISSN 2664-2069 (Online) | Sportivna nauka ta zdorov'â lûdini

DOI: 10.28925/2664-2069.2020.2

Sport Science and Human Health:

the scientific electronic periodical journal. — K., 2020. — № 2(4). — 126 p.

The scientific electronic periodical journal 'Sports Science and Human Health' highlights the results of scientific research in different fields of sports, physical education, physical culture, sports medicine, physical therapy, ergotherapy, modern recreational and health-improving technologies, as well as research related to human health and those to be valuable for ensuring the innovative development of Ukraine.

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The journal 'Sports Science and Human Health' is added to the list of the Ukrainian scientific professional journals of category "B" in which results of dissertations for obtaining scientific degrees of the doctor and the candidate of sciences in a specialty 017 Physical education and sports can be published by the Law of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No 886 of July 02, 2020.

The journal 'Sport Science and Human Health' is indexed in IndexCopernicus, CrossRef, BASE, Google Scholar, WorldCat-OCLC, ResearchBib, ResearchGate, Bibliometrics of Ukrainian Science, Scientific Periodicals of Ukraine.

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The journal is recommended for publication by the Academic Council of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (protocol No 9 of October 29, 2020).

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DOI:10.28925/2664-2069.2020.2.10

УДК: 796.01:159.9

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN TRAINING TAEKWONDO ATHLETES IN FOUR-YEAR OLYMPIC CYCLES

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Abstract

Introduction. The problems of psychological support in training qualified taekwondo athletes in four-year Olympic cycles are considered in the article. The national and international experience in relevant questions on planning and organization of psychological and pedagogical process within different structural entities of training process are analyzed.

The *aim* is to determine the problems of psychological support in training qualified taekwondo athletes in four-year Olympic cycles based on studying specialized research and methodological literature and questionnaire among experts.

Material and methods: analysis of literary and Internet sources, questionnaire among experts, pedagogical observation, content-analysis.

Results. Upon conditions of intensification of competitive activities in taekwondo and raising level of competition on the international sports scene, the necessity of improving general system of training Olympic athletes in four-year cycles via optimization of the psychological support process was emphasized. Various approaches and forms of psychological support in training athletes in Olympic sports were determined. The peculiarities of psychological support in training athletes within long-term improvement process were analyzed. The need in planning psychological support in training taekwondo athletes in four-year cycles considering the content and pedagogical objectives of specific training periods was emphasized. The necessity of planning long-term continuous work of a psychologist in the course of training athletes in four-year Olympic cycles was focused.

Key words: psychological training, psychological support, athletes' training system, four-year Olympic cycles, competitive activity.



Introduction. One of the most relevant directions of the athletes' training system is optimizing the training in four-year Olympic cycles. Recently, the tendency to prolonging the period of performances in high performance sport is observed. The strongest athletes' performances in two-three Olympic cycles become usual; the number of cases when athletes perform in four-five and even six-seven Olympic Games keeps growing. Development of the structure and content of four-year Olympic cycles is at the same time an important objective, understanding that every new cycle in an athlete's career cannot repeat the content of the previous one, and has to be an independent entity [7, 10, 13, 17].

The current level of sporting achievements in taekwondo requires targeted organization of the athletes' long-term training, searching for more and more efficient organization forms, means and methods of teaching and training work as well as control of performance level being an efficient instrument of management and planning training process [Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.8, 19, 29].

Constant growth of taekwondo popularity and sharpening of competition from the foreign rivals stimulate searching for new ways and reserves of boosting sporting skills among athletes. One of such promising ways can become a detailed analysis of the structure of competitive activity in taekwondo and other main components of its realization and support.

In the latest decades, fundamental changes occurred in the competition

rules and methodology of long-term sports training. In different countries of the world a constant search for progressive approaches aimed to improve the taekwondo athletes' training and competitive activities takes place [1, 8].

At the same time, today it is possible to observe the tendency of sharpening the fighting in international sporting events in different types of combat sports. Recently, it is getting more and more difficult for the national taekwondo athletes to gain the right to be qualified for participation in the Olympic Games.

Optimization of the training process within four-year training cycles, as we see it, can become one of the most important directions of targeted training of qualified taekwondo athletes for the Olympic Games. At the same time, improvement of teaching and training as well as competitive activity among athletes and planning of physical workloads every year of a four-year cycle are important in the course of using modern means and methods of psychological support in training athletes as well as search for efficient mechanisms of system psychological control of the qualified taekwondo athletes' state of performance in the course of the whole Olympic cycle.

Competitive activity in combat sports overall and in taekwondo, notably, is characterized by high emotionality and versatility. Thus, the athletes have to keep acting upon conditions of unpredictability, quickly react to the rival's actions, change tactics and manner of conducting the fight depending on the course of the matchup [1, 29].



important psychological qualities from the athletes which play a crucial role both in the course of selection to the high performance sport and in the course of training and competitive activities among taekwondo athletes, in many specialists' opinion.

As specialists see it [2, 6, 16, 20, 30], psychological qualities can be considered as natural abilities being of a great importance for successful competitive and training activities. Managing the qualified taekwondo athletes' psychological states in the course of four-year training cycles allows considerable increase of possibilities to control their own actions, increase the level of personal competence influencing on more responsible and rational training for performing in competitions, and enrich the variability of behavior reactions upon complex conditions of competitive fight.

Many national and foreign researchers studied the athletes' psychological qualities in combat sports overall and taekwondo, notably [19, 26, 27, 29] whose works emphasize the importance of psychological qualities as: thinking, perceptive abilities, temperament type, volitional powers, level of motivation, self-control, self-assessment, different manifestations of concentration, etc.

Yet, in spite of a big number of research and methodological data in questions on psychological training in combat sports and control of their special skills, the mechanisms of psychological training complex control among qualified taekwondo athletes in the course of Olympic training cycles

Determination of the range of priority psychological qualities having direct relation to the efficiency of training and competitive activities among taekwondo athletes in high performance sport is an important objective.

Substantiating a general procedure of organization and mechanism of sage control for psychological state among athletes getting ready for the Olympic Games throughout four years, etc. is of a particular importance, in our opinion.

Connection of the work with research programs, topics and plans.

The research was completed according to the «Composite scientific and research work plan in the sphere of physical education and sports for the years 2016-2020» approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on the topic 2.27 «Improvement of the system of sports training and competitive activity among qualified athletes upon current conditions of intensification of competitive activity» (state registration number 0174000806).

The **aim** of the research was to determine the problems of psychological support in training qualified taekwondo athletes in four-year Olympic cycles based on studying specialized research and methodological literature and questionnaire among experts.

Material and methods of the research: analysis of literary and Internet sources, questionnaire among experts, pedagogical observation, content-analysis. The research is based on the analysis of literary sources as well as on the experts' thoughts of the

key problems in training athletes in four-year Olympic cycles and their psychological support. The research articles, statistical references and other methodological documents where the questions on psychological support in training combat sports athletes are observed were analyzed.

Pedagogical observation was conducted according to the peculiarities of competitive activity among taekwondo athletes of different age and qualification. The discrepancies in technical and tactical performance as well as manner of leading a competitive fight were being determined. 18 Ukrainian trainers took part in the questionnaire: 9 Masters of Sports, 6 International Masters of Sports, and 3 Honored Coaches of Ukraine.

Results of the research and discussion. It is known that achieving high sporting results is possible only provided that there is clear planning of different training aspects among athletes in the course of long-term improvement, as sports training is a continuous process characterized by its cyclicity – periodical repetition of relatively independent finished periods of time (cycles, periods, stages of long-term training) [5, 7, 10, 13, 17].

The objectives of rational centralized athletes' training gain a particular significance in the course of training for participation in the Olympic Games. Recently, the tendency towards apparent increase of the level of sporting results and sharpening of competition on the international scene is observed.

The role of implementation of research and methodological developments in planning the training

process, using newest means and methods of stimulation as well as recovery of the athletes' functionality is growing.

The distinguishing of four-year Olympic cycles in the structure of training high level athletes, in V.M. Platonov's analysis [13], was caused by the need to organize consistent training for the Olympic Games. At the same time, the content of each stages of such training must be related to solving the transitional objectives determined by the aim of training athletes for the Olympic Games.

With every passing year, a great importance was given to the questions of rational building of four-year cycles of training. This was caused, in the specialists' analysis [5, 13], by a few reasons. Principally, considerable growth of the period of successful performances for many athletes in high performance sport plays a significant role. If throughout 1950-1970 the participation of an athlete even in two-three Olympic Games was not a common thing, now in some sports the cases of the athletes' successful performances on Olympic scene six-seven times can be observed.

It is hard to disagree on the specialists' opinion stating that duration of successful performances on the highest level greatly depends on rational building of training within four-year cycles of training.

Considering individual peculiarities of each athlete, searching for an optimal structure of competitive activity, defining functional reserves for further improvement, optimizing the amounts of training and competitive activities throughout each year of Olympic training, searching for



тихих успешних результатов, см. [5, 13, 17].

At the same time, in our opinion, the questions of managing the athletes' training in Olympic cycles in combat sports are not studied enough. Particularly, in those having gained the Olympic status recently and faced the problem of targeted training to the main events of four years for the first time.

The important feature of the current approach to organization of the athletes' training is awareness of the necessity of scientifically substantiated planning of the athletes' training as an overall process. These fundamental approaches to the problem of training athletes found their reflection also in the principles of organization and content of psychological support for the athletes' training in Olympic sport [2-4, 9, 16, 21, 30, 32].

The transition from solving partial tasks related only to individual questions to psychologically substantiated design of the overall training process is a peculiarity of the current approach to psychological support of the athletes' training. [9, 22, 30, 33].

However, it is worth noting that such overall idea on psychological support in the athlete' training in Olympic sport has appeared quite recently. It can be partially explained by methodological and scientific complexity of a studied object – mental manifestations of a personality among high level athletes upon extreme conditions of their professional activities and lack of a single view on unified approaches in organization and providing psychological support in the

today, there is a great number of scientific publications mostly devoted to studying individual questions on psychological training and psychological support in the athletes' training found in specialized literature.

H.V. Lozhkin, A.B. Kolosov [9], O.R. Hryn [4], V.I. Voronova [3] studied the athletes' mental states and their regulation in training and competitive activities. The researches on psychological nature of interrelations and conflicts between the athletes and trainers can be found in scientific works by I.I. Suleimanov [15]. The question on increasing the level of motivation and volitional training among the athletes was covered in R.A. Piloian's publications [12] and others.

The research and methodological works of the specialists devoted to manifestation of different psychological qualities among athletes are especially noteworthy [2-4, 19, 23, 28]. The informative means of the examined qualities' and mental features' diagnostics were selected and approved. The model and purposeful guides for the degree of their manifestation for successful competitive activity in different sports, etc., were established [2, 20, 23-25, 32].

Diverse forms and methods of correcting the athletes' psychological states (sports coaching, psychological training, psychological counselling, psychological rehabilitation, etc.) are gaining more and more popularity in the course of the high level athletes' training. [2-4, 30].

Today, the specialists in sports psychology begin to discuss exactly

psychological support in the athletes' training in Olympic sport more and more often. Psychological support personifies a wide-ranging social and psychological process not constricting the spectrum of a psychologist's activity only to direct training for competitions [3, 9, 11, 22, 30].

The key elements of the process of psychological support in the athletes' training must be organically interrelated to the process of sporting and pedagogical activities being the principal of the whole training system. The concept of psychological support must be up to the objectives, principles, structure and content of the athletes' sporting and pedagogical activities, notably on different stages of long-term career.

Probably, just because of the weak relation between psychological science and principles of teaching and training process it can be so difficult to understand the mechanism of implementing the research results conducted in the field of psychological science and to determine the relevant ways of their usage within periodization of the athletes' training.

Psychological support has to meet practical demands on the athletes' training in the course of long-term improvement [22, 30]. Within this kind of a continuous process also the athlete's psychological raising takes place, the gifted children and teenagers are determined for further performances in high performance sport, individual peculiarities of each athlete are established, strengths and weaknesses in the structure of psychological performance are found, necessary social and psychological conditions for organization of training

and competitive activities are provided, specific psychological standards and the ethics of behavior within the team and plenty of other important issues requiring a long period of time are suggested.

Psychological training in today's sport becomes an integral part of direct training for participation in competitions. It is of a particular importance for the high level athletes requiring mobilization of the present functional potential and psychological resource for demonstrating the highest sporting results upon complex stressing conditions during responsible competitions [14].

Such targeted impacts from the psychologist can be accomplished throughout a yearly cycle, independent macrocycle or directly in the course of final stage of the athlete's training for competitive activity. The questions on psychological support directly in the course of competitions (days or hours before the start, direct entry on the fight, etc.) are especially noteworthy.

Psychological performance of the athlete is an integral part of the overall performance structure together with technical, tactical, physical, functional ones, etc. It has to have a particular structure depending on specific conditions of competitive activity in a particular sport as well as individual peculiarities of an athlete's personality, and adequate means for their diagnostics.

In spite of this, the views of a range of prominent sporting specialists in sports theory are a bit different in the questions of the structure and forms of psychological support in the athletes' training.

Thus, V.I. Voronova [3] considers



that the main formats of psychological support in the athletes' training must to be psychological studying, psychological diagnostics, psychological counselling, psychological training, and psychological regulation. For their efficient realization there is a need in continuous cooperation between a psychologist and an athlete. It is possible only due to constant being in the team. Such approach, to the author's opinion, will provide long-term planning of the necessary directions of working with each specific athlete, make it possible to reject unadvisable impacts of social and natural environments, teach them the methods of self-regulation, confirm the trust and openness of relations between a psychologist and an athlete, get important psychological terms and knowledge across the trainer improving their level of competence and broadening the vision in professional knowledge.

H. Horska [22], is making an appeal to the necessity of a kind of continuous combined training considering fragmentariness and short period of using psychological means in the course of the athletes' training one of the substantial drawbacks of the current psychological support in the athletes' training.

Psychologists of the different countries of the world accomplishing psychological support in the athletes' training for the Olympic Games bet on systematic consistent work aimed to boost the psychological resources creating the necessary preconditions for successful competitive activity. The need in individualization, considering the specificity of a sport, and

peculiarities of Olympic competitions are emphasized. To H. Horska's opinion, the idea of sporting psychological department as an analogue of emergence aid whose service is needed upon critical conditions is becoming history [22].

However, in spite of this, the question on what period of time is covered by the specialists (a four-year cycle, a one-year cycle of training, or training on the final stage, etc.) remains inexplicable.

The opinion of H.V. Lozhkin and A.B. Kolosov [9] is also interesting. They consider the important ways for optimization of sporting activity within psychological support the following ones:

- approximation of characteristics of an athlete's (of a specific specialization) personality to ideal ones; creating comfortable professional environment (psychological climate);
- optimization of the impacts of unfavorable environmental factors via dosing the intensity of them, increasing personal (emotional, stressing) stability (resistance);
- modelling the trainings upon conditions approximated to the real ones, development of doping-strategies' algorithms, etc.

With no relation to specific stages of training it is difficult to understand what period of time needs to be accounted for using the optimization directions mentioned by the authors. In which period of training process it is needed to work at this or that question.

In most scientific works psychological support is interrelated to fundamental principles of the periodization theory of sports training,

meets the content and objectives of different stages of training, and concerns the structure of long-term improvement [2-4, 30].

On initial stages of training it is relevant to develop psychological qualities and features as: motivation to do sports, psychomotor skills development, introducing a competitive point of sport to the children, encouragement and moral support for young athletes, etc.

On final stages of long-term training the directions of psychological support determining efficiency of competitive activity and an athlete's ability to overcome high psychoemotional pressures of high performance sport, providing mobilization of reserve abilities of the body in the field of psychological performance, making it possible to correct an athlete's psychological state before the start and after the competitions as well as to conduct psychological mobilization before the performance, etc., prevail.

The content and structure of psychological support also have to meet the periodization at a level of macro- and mesostructure of sports training. In spite of the importance of such knowledge, there is a considerable deficiency of research in this direction in specialized literature.

Planning of psychological support and training throughout, for example, one-year cycle is impossible without considering those objectives and specificity of the training process planned by the trainer and an athlete in different months.

If the athlete remains in the training period or has just started teaching and training process, requires

recovery after the previous training and motivation cycle to adjust for continuous basic training, it is relevant to plan corresponding means and methods of psychological training making it possible to solve similar objectives. And vice versa, during the period of direct training for the competitions, when the level of emotional pressure is extremely high, it is worth planning the means of correction and stabilization of psychoemotional state, etc.

It is notable, that you should follow a similar differentiated approach in the course of planning the content of psychological support also in four-year Olympic cycles. The approach by B. Blumenstein and R. Lidor [18] can serve as an example for planning psychological support in four-year Olympic cycles realized by them in the course of training the athletes of the Israel national teams for the Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing.

The authors were setting the determination of the level of the athletes' psychological performance, psychological barriers and personal resources for realization of sporting abilities as well as conducting lessons in development of professionally important psychological skills for the athletes as the objectives of the first year of the Olympic cycle.

The second and the third years of the Olympic cycle were considered as a period for drilling practical usage of the acquired psychological skills in the course of trainings and competitions. On this stage of training it was important to determine the most suitable means for solving psychological objectives faced by each athlete as well as consolidation of skills



activity.

The fourth year of the Olympic cycle was the most responsible. The psychologist's work objective in this period consists in assisting the athletes be qualified successfully to the Olympic team. Conducting training for those athletes already being members of the Olympic team is not of a less significance. Also, assisting the athletes not having qualified to the Olympic team aimed to overcome failure and disappointment is very important.

To H. Horska's opinion [22], the objective of psychological support in the course of the athletes' performances directly during the Olympic Games is a particularly important and complex issue. Psychologists include decreasing of uncertainty a competitive situation not only by virtue of taking part in pre-Olympic competitions for the candidates to the Olympic teams but also due to novice-Olympians' acquaintance with the experience of those athletes having already participated in the Olympic Games into the content of psychological support for training athletes.

The importance of considering the specificity of the athletes' psychological support performing in the Olympic Games for the first time and those who have come back to elite sport after a continuous break is noted. For the athletes taking part in the Olympic Games for the first time a specific status of these events, lack of self-confidence as well as inadequate assessment of significance of some conditions of the events are a source of mental pressure.

related to the issues of psychological support in training qualified athletes in four-year Olympic cycles since the complexity and responsibility for such continuous centralized training draws considerable requirements to the level of the athletes' psychological performance and needs constant control for their psychoemotional states.

In the works of national and foreign authors (H. Horska [22], V.I. Voronova [3], N.L. Vysochina [4], O.R. Hryn [4], R. Anderson [16], P. Wylleman [32] and others) psychological support in training athletes on different stages of long-term improvement, various forms and means for the athletes' psychological training, and peculiarities of psychological training for the competitions are analyzed.

However, to our opinion, the issue of psychological support in training athletes exactly in four-year training cycle in the course of which the important components of the system of psychological support have to be organically interrelated to strategic objectives in four-year plan for training athletes to the Olympic Games is not less relevant, and has to become its important additional element.

Psychological support in training athletes getting ready for the performances in the Olympic Games has to include planning of not only the objectives for each year of the Olympic cycle but also the ones for independent stages of one-year training cycles.

At the same time, it is worth distinguishing the objectives and means of psychodiagnostics of the athletes' states with development and

implementation of the further program of specialized psychological support impacts being the most informative and adequate to the objectives and specificity of the stage.

To our opinion, determining the most significant psychological qualities and features of a personality being directly related to success of their training and competitive activities for combat sports overall and for taekwondo notably deserves special attention. The psychological qualities and states being significant for the sport require constant control in the course of targeted training athletes for the Olympic Games.

Determining the structure of psychological performance of a specific athlete makes it possible to individualize the process of their sports training considerably, and permanent control for the dynamics of psychoemotional states' changes – to react promptly to their shifting, choose the relevant methods and means for correction, and anticipate the prospects for achieving the highest results at the main competitions of a four-year period.

Psychological control for the state of the athletes' performance level in the course of psychological support in training athletes in Olympic cycles, to our opinion, must obtain an important role.

System control for the state of psychological performance among the athletes-Olympians makes it possible to determine individual psychological peculiarities of each athlete, establish the changes in the structure of their psychological performance in the course of training and competitive activities on time, and determine the

efficiency of using various means and psychocorrective methods in the course of targeted training for the Olympic Games using feedbacks.

Conclusions:

1. One of the noticeable tendencies for development of modern Olympic sports is constant increasing of spectacularity and commercial attraction of the Olympic events. The longings of the international sporting organizations' managers to intensify competitive activity in various sports as well as enhancing the mass media's and community's attention to sporting events are observed more and more acutely. Today already it has led to considerable increase of competition at international sporting events and become a catalyzer for searching for newest technologies of the athletes' training for the main events of four-year period. More and more often it is possible to see experienced athletes remaining in high performance sport for a long time and perform successfully throughout a few Olympic cycles.

2. One of the most important directions for system training of the athletes-Olympians is psychological support which has to include the whole complex of social and psychological measures and actions aimed to creating all the necessary preconditions for successful long-term training and providing quality training for high level athletes in various structure units within the training process.

3. The issue of psychological support is particularly sharp in the course of targeted training of qualified taekwondo athletes in four-year Olympic cycles since exactly during



this period of time it is necessary to mobilize the functional and psychological resource of a personality among the best athletes of the state, build the training process quality and create all the necessary conditions for successful athletes' performances in the Olympic Games.

4. Creating the whole mechanism of psychological support organization of taekwondo athletes' training and the algorithm of controlling the state of

their psychological performance in the course of the total four-year period of training for the Olympic Games is a relevant objective.

Prospects for further research are related to developing the algorithm of complex control and further correction of the level of psychological performance among qualified taekwondo athletes in four-year Olympic training cycles.

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The article received October, 1, 2020

Romoldanova I. Psychological support in training taekwondo athletes in four-year Olympic cycles. *Sports Science and Human Health*. 2020; 2(4):95-107.
DOI:10.28925/2664-2069.2020.2.10