

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vernon Furtado da Silva (Original scientific paper) EIGHT WEEKS OF HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING IMPROVE HAEMATOLOGICAL HEALTH AND DECREASE BLOOD PRESSURE IN SLIGHTLY-HYPERTENSIVE ELDERLY	8	Fatmir Pireva, Blerta Abazi, Zorica Stankovska, Armend Xhemajli, Besim Gashi (Original scientific paper) DIFFERENCES IN SOME MOTOR SKILLS BETWEEN THE STUDENTS ATTENDING THE FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA AND AAB COLLEGE	85
Michal Blanár, Jaroslav Broďáni, Monika Czaková, Natália Kováčová (Original scientific paper) DEPENDENCE OF THE SKATING AND RUNNING PERFORMANCE ON THE EXPLOSIVE STRENGTH OF LOWER LIMBS AND DYNAMIC BALANCE OF ICE HOCKEY PLAYERS	16	Farhad Kouhi, Seyed Hasan Seyed Ameri, Seyed Mohamad Kashef (Original scientific paper) INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF MARKETING MIX FACTORS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SPORTS MARKETING IN THE VOLLEYBALL PREMIER LEAGUE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	89
Hadjar Kherfane Mohamed, Zerf Mohammed, Mokrani Djamel, Fateh Ziregu, Abdoun Nassir (Original scientific paper) PLYOMETRIC EXERCISES AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF STRENGTH IN SHOT PUT ACHIEVEMENTS	23	Aleksander Osipov, Roman Nagovitsyn, Viktor Kovalev, Sergey Sadyrin, Tatyana Zhavner, Anna Vapaeva, Tatyana Ratmanskaya (Original scientific paper) INDICATORS OF THE MOTIVATION LEVEL FOR AVOIDING FAILURE IN FEMALE BOXERS WITH MASCULINE AND ANDROGYNOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL GENDER TRAITS	93
Branimir Mikić, Benjamin Šut, Mate Brekalo, Asim Bojić (Original scientific paper) RECOGNITION OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT COMPONENTS OF WELLNESS AS ONE'S OWN ACTIVITIES IN THE TOURIST OFFER	29	Oleh Shalar, Yevhenii Strykalenko, Viktor Huzar, Vladislav Homenko, Tatyana Popovich (Original scientific paper) PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS OF HANDBALL PLAYERS FOR THE COMPETITION	98
Mariam Ahmad Abu Alim (Original scientific paper) BALANCE AND STABILITY STATUS DURING A TEMPORARY ANTERIOR LOAD CARRIAGE	36	Abedin Ibrahim, Vildane Jashari, Damir Đedović, Osmo Bajrić, Alena Čemalović (Original scientific paper) FACTOR ANALYSIS OF BIOCHEMICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN YOUNG SWIMMERS FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	106
Mustafa Fatih Çetintaş, Hande Başat, Kerem Alptekin, Mustafa Ağaoğlu (Original scientific paper) THE EFFECT OF SACROILIAC JOINT MANIPULATIONS ON THE FUNCTIONAL LEVEL AND PERFORMANCE OF HEALTHY ATHLETES	42	Neshati Abolfazl, Seyed Ameri Mir Hasan, Janani Hamid (Original scientific paper) DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF PUPILS' PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL ABILITY IN RELATION TO THE TYPE OF SCHOOL	110
Taher Afsharnezhad, Masoud Khorsandi (Original scientific paper) THE EFFECTS OF PRE-EXERCISE MASSAGE ON MUSCLE ACTIVITY DURING SUSTAINED CONTRACTION	53	Branimir Mikić, Benjamin Šut, Ivana Čerkez-Zovko, Senad Dervić, Ivana Ivanek DIFFERENCES IN THE MORPHOLOGICAL AND MOTOR STATUS OF FEMALE STUDENTS FROM INNER-CITY AND SUBURBAN CITY AREAS	121
Damir Ahmić, Amra Tuzović, Nihad Selimović (Original scientific paper) COMPARATIVE FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE REFEREEING APPROACH IN BASKETBALL	61	Amineh Sahranavard Gargari, Fatemeh Sadat Hosseini, Malek Ahmadi (Original scientific paper) INTERVENTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, THE ROLE OF PERSONAL - SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS ON EMPLOYED WOMEN'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	128
Nining Widyah Kusnanik, Rizky Sota Dyaksa, Stephen P Bird (Original scientific paper) THE EFFECT OF AEROBIC TRAINING IN DECREASING BODY FAT AND INCREASING FREE FATTY ACIDS FOR OVERWEIGHT FEMALES	74		
Ismail Ghassab Mahmoud, Mo'een Ahmad Oudat (Original scientific paper) THE EFFECT OF USING COMPETITIVE AND COOPERATIVE TEACHING STYLES IN LEARNING SOME TRACK AND FIELD EVENTS	78		

PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS OF HANDBALL PLAYERS FOR THE COMPETITION

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ABSTRACT

The athletes' readiness for competitions is characterized by a certain set of features (functional, mental, physical, technical and tactical, etc.) that manifest in their unity. Aim: determine the readiness of handball players for competing with rivals of a different class. Materials and methods: the research was conducted on the basis of the Kherson High School of Physical Culture. A female handball team of the Super League "Dniproanka" was involved in the research and included 15 handball players aged 19 to 32. Sports Masters of Ukraine were a contingent of the team. The research lasted for 3 years (2015-2017), took place in three stages, and was conducted in the form of observation, psychological testing and questionnaires. Results: the research on the handball team "Dniproanka's" psychological readiness for competitions was conducted during games with the Super League teams of Ukraine, different in terms of athletic skill and experience. Consequently, 35.7% of handball players had an average level of mental readiness, 50% were above the average, and 14.3% had a high level in the game of HC "Dniproanka" against HC "Econom-University" (the team below the class). In the game against HC "Real" (the team is equal in class), 20% of the players had an average level of psychological readiness for the competition and 80% were above the average. In the game against HC "Galichanka" (team above the class), 61.5% of handball players with an average level of mental readiness for the competition and 38.5% with above the average were found. Conclusions: the achieved level of mental readiness can be considered sustainable and stable. This gives grounds for asserting that Kherson handball players are confident in their pre-start period, and during the competition they are persistently and fully capable of fighting to achieve the goal.

Keywords: anxiety, excitement, inhibition, emotion, confidence.

INTRODUCTION

The current specificity of the sports training, aimed at achieving high results, requires the athlete to have a large, and sometimes limiting strain of all physiological reserves of the body, including mental capabilities (Bolotin, and Bakayev, 2017; Gavrilova, Shelkov, Churganov, and Matochkina, 2015; Huzar, 2001b). In these conditions the dependence of the effectiveness of human activity on the individual properties of the nervous system increases. The boundary level of physical activity, combined with high emotional stress, often leads to over-strain of physiological systems, their shifts, and a decrease in the functional state of the organism as a whole (Bolotin, and Bakayev, 2017; Bolotin, Bakayev, and

Bochkovskaya, 2018; Huzar, and Havrylchenko, 2001a). Against the background of the expressed physiological manifestations of overtraining, the often hidden, but very important psychological changes can be found, since the participation of athletes in competitions of various levels requires, above all, the internal stability of a man (Huzar, Shalar and Norik, 2014; Kozina, Slyusarev, and Volkov, 2004). Achievement of high sports indexes depends on the corresponding level of technical, tactical, physical and psychological training of athletes (Platonov, 2018; Zhanneta K., Irina S., Tatyana B., Olena R., Olena L., and Anna I, 2015; Huzar, 2000b). This statement is relevant throughout all sports. The central place of physical fitness is also determined by the fact that other aspects of athletes' preparedness (technical, tactical, psychological) are implemented simultaneously and to a large extent depend on the level of development of

motor abilities, physical development and functional capabilities of the athlete's body, which determines the content of physical training (Platonov, 2019; Huzar, 2001a; Huzar, 2000a). Direct physical training of handball players is one of the most important components in achieving sports results (Nesen, Pomeshchikova, Druz, Pasko, and Chervona, 2018; Strykalenko, Zhosan and Shalar, 2017; ZhL, K, 2004), but psychological training plays an important role in an athlete's sports career (Strykalenko, and Shalar, 2017; Zhosan, Strykalenko, and Shalar, 2014; Shalar, Zhosan, Shum, and Strykalenko, 2014). In modern sports, the requirements for the training of athletes are increasing. Without diminishing the importance of such components in the preparation of athletes, as physical, technical and tactical, it should be emphasized that the psychological component is no less significant. From the practice of sports activities, it is known that the results of an athlete's performance depend on such personal qualities as emotional and nervous-psycho stability, anxiety, aggressiveness, and others (Yakovlev, and Babushkin, 2016; Gryn, 2015; Ilyin, 2010; Weinberg and Gould, 1998). General psychological training is closely linked to the educational and ideological work of athletes. This is especially true of the formation of ideological beliefs, the cultivation of the personality traits. The program of psychological training should include events aimed at the formation of a sports character and positive interpersonal relationships in the handball team (Huzar, Shalar, and Mordiew, 2016; Shalar, Snopova, and Strykalenko, 2010). The research aim is to develop a methodology for assessing the pre-emergent psychological readiness of handball players and to determine the readiness for competitions with rivals of a different class.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted on the basis of the Kherson High School of Physical Culture. A female handball team of the Super League "Dniproanka" was involved in the research and included 15 handball players aged 19 to 32. Sports Masters of Ukraine were a contingent of the team. The research lasted for 3 years (2015-2017), took place in three stages, and was conducted in the form of observation, psychological testing, measurement of anthropometric data of athletes and conducting control sports standards. To assess the psychological properties of handball players, the method of L.V. Volkov "Estimation of the properties of the nervous system of athletes", the method of Ch. D. Spielberger - Yu. L. Hanina "Scale of reactivity: situational and personal anxiety" and the method "Self-assessment of the temperament structure" were applied to determine the properties of temperament. As for the definition of mental and pre-star conditions, the method of L.V. Volkov "Test questionnaire of the pretesting condition of an athlete" and the method of R. S. Weinberg-D Gould "Self-confidence" were used. Also, during our

research, the author's method "Diagnosis of the pre-start state of handball players" was developed. This technique included observing the external manifestations of certain attributes of athletes in the period that covered the time interval before the start of the competition, and directly during the competition. The components of this technique are as follows: a) sober confidence in their strength; b) the desire to fight towards the end to achieve a common goal and victory; c) the optimal level of emotional excitement; d) resistance to shocks; e) the ability to manage their actions, feelings, and behaviour. All data received during the process of monitoring the players was recorded in the protocol. Each component had to be assessed by the scale in 3 points, where 1 point was low, 2 points were average and 3 points were a high level of expression.

RESULTS

According to the results of evaluating the strength of the nervous system from the side of excitement, all players of the team "Dniproanka" had a high level. The strength of the nervous system from the side of the braking manifested itself at a high level of 80%, as well as indices of mobility related to nervous processes encompassed 93.3% of handball players. According to the second feature, it was found that the overwhelming majority, namely, 12 out of 15 athletes, were marked by the strength of the nervous system from the side of inhibition.

They are more calm and balanced during trainings or competitions. Among the three girls with low scores, who are also Masters of Sports aged 21-23 (a goalkeeper and two line players), there were periodic problems with distraction and mood change during exercise (Table 1). The personal anxiety of all handball players of the "Dniproanka" team is mostly moderate, except for 2 players - a goalkeeper - 23 years old, and a far right - 19 years old, who had a high level of personal anxiety.

They are Masters of Sports and played handball from 10-11, but in their game positions they are secondary numbers. Significant deviations from the level of moderate anxiety require special attention of the trainer, sports doctor and psychologist, because high anxiety involves the tendency of athletes to have obsessive thoughts about failure in future competitions. Situational or the so-called reactive anxiety at a high level was found only in one team player - he's also a goalkeeper - 23 years old and a Master of Sports. In this case, the coach who works with an athlete is useful to reduce the subjective significance of the competitive situation and the tasks of future activities, that is, to shift

the emphasis on understanding the process of its future competitive activities and the formation of an athlete's feelings of confidence and success on the basis of adopted tactical manoeuvres at the competitions, even if the opponents can oppose the athlete by doing something else.

This induces the athlete to think not about the outcome of the competition, but about their actions in the competition, which optimizes the level of his reactive anxiety (RA). In 9 handball players, there was a low pre-competition anxiety.

Low anxiety, on the contrary, requires increased attention to the motives of the activity and increased sense of responsibility of the athlete. According to the properties of temperament, it can be noted that in the "Dniproanka" team, most players, namely 60%, are extrovert. Introverts comprise 40%.

They are mostly goalkeepers. Rigidity and plasticity are in the ratio of 66.6% to 33.4%. Rigid athletes degrade the quality of the exercises in the competition, in comparison with training, not disturbing, emotionally non-excited and impulsive. More rigid handball players in the competition, on the contrary, show better exercises than during training.

Emotional excitability prevails over the balance – 86.6%. This is admissible because handball is a very impulsive, emotional and intense game. Therefore, players in the course of their sports career adapt and possess such skills. The reaction rate in 73.4% of the team is fast. This is characterized by the fact that these athletes have very good attention, a quick reaction to the ball, the opponent or other game aspects.

The activity is not very high. This is due to the fact that the test was conducted almost at the end of the game season, and the strength and activity of athletes have already weakened a little. The high sincerity of the answers to the test questions was found in 60% of the team, with 33.4% of average honesty, so you can generally trust the results of

this test. The assessment of the level of confidence in handball players was carried out in the form of an open questionnaire, which determined the following features: uncertainty, confidence, excessive confidence. Based on these findings, a high level of confidence was found in nine handball players out of fifteen.

These players have been doing sports, handball, for more than 10 years. Margaryta G. (a guard) and Tetyana K. (a goalkeeper) were second numbers in their playing positions, and seven other girls with high levels of confidence: Kateryna K. (a guard),

Anastasia G. (line player), Valeria K. (left half-median), Tatiana P. (far left), Alyona S. (a guard), Julia T. (far right), Tatiana Ch. (a goalkeeper) were the players of the main team. The highest level of confidence was noted by Margarita G. (88%).

She is a Master of Sports and a guard player. Six handball players had an average level of confidence. Basically, these are second-class players or young players. We also managed to identify two girls with an average level of over-confidence: Karolina S. (49%) and Maryna P. (35%).

These players are Masters of Sports, have not participated in high-level competitions, international competitions and played for the Ukrainian national teams. The insecurity of all "Dniproanka" team players was low.

This is evident, because the "Dniproanka" team in the handball tournament table among the Women's Super League teams took the third place, but had all chances to fight for a silver medal. Consequently, most players in the team had high levels of self-confidence, which is very important in the team sport.

The pre-start condition of handball players was evaluated in three components, namely: physical, emotional and cognitive. The test was conducted before the important game with the team "Carpathians" in Uzhhorod, therefore, the majority of players on the team had a sufficient level of mental status for all components (Table 2)

Table 1: Assessment of the anxiety level in handball players from HC "Dniproanka", Kherson

Level	Features	Personal	Reactive (pre-competition)
Low		-	60
Average		87	34
High		13	6

Table 2: Self-assessment of the pre-start state of Kherson HC "Dniproanka" handball players

№	Name	Physical (Ph)			Emotional (E)			Cognitive (C)		
		A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
1	Anastasiya H.	20	80	-	20	50	30	70	30	-
2	Hrystyna G.	30	50	20	40	50	10	70	30	-
3	Margaryta G.	30	70	-	50	30	20	40	50	10
4	Valentyna D.	10	80	10	30	70	-	30	70	-
5	Kateryna K.	10	80	10	20	60	20	40	50	10
6	Valeriya K.	20	80	-	20	60	20	10	50	40
7	Anna S.	10	70	20	30	50	20	70	30	-
8	Tetyana P.	10	80	10	20	60	20	70	20	10
9	Maryna P.	40	50	10	50	30	20	60	30	10
10	Alona K.	10	90	-	60	20	20	40	60	-
11	Tetyana K.	10	80	10	40	10	50	60	40	-
12	Alona S.	30	70	-	50	30	20	50	40	10
13	Karolina S.	10	70	20	30	30	40	40	50	10
14	Tetyana Ch.	10	80	10	30	60	10	30	60	10
15	Julia T.	10	80	10	60	40	-	50	30	20

Notes: A - better than usual
 B - as always
 C - worse than usual.

According to the results of the conducted testing, we can say that all handball players of the HC "Dniproanka" were at an adequate level when it comes to the indicator of physical condition, because they evaluated their physical strength – "as always". As for the emotional component, the athletes showed different levels, namely: "better than usual" emotional component was felt by five handball players. They are set to play and set apart in actions and behaviour. The level "as always" was found in eight athletes, it is mainly handball players of the main team. The state of "worse than usual" was felt by two handball players, a goalkeeper and a line player who, according to their game positions, have second numbers, so they were worried before the game a little more than others. The cognitive component of most team players is revealed to be at a high level. In 53.3% of the girls, this index was "better than normal", and 46.7% of athletes stated "as usual".

The state of "worse than usual" was not found in any of the handball players of the HC "Dniproanka".

DISCUSSION

Mental readiness for competitions as an athlete's position at a certain time may help or hinder the full manifestation and realization of all its capabilities in a particular competitions (Grin, 2015). According to G. Lozhkin, the component composition of mental readiness should include motivational, cognitive, professional, regulatory and behavioural components (Lozhkin, 2011). Another opinion is adhered by G. Babushkin, who believes that the athlete's readiness is determined by: sober confidence in their strength; the desire to fight

towards the end to achieve a common goal and victory; the optimal level of emotional excitement; resistance to shocks; the ability to manage their actions, feelings, and behaviour. (Yakovlev, and Babushkin, 2016). These features were taken into account when constructing the author's technique. To assess the level of the HC "Dniprolyanka" handball players' psychological readiness, the author's method "Diagnosis of pre-start condition of athletes" was applied to the competition. The study of psychological readiness for competitions in handball players of the "Dniprolyanka" team in games against the Super League teams of Ukraine was conducted during three games (Table 3). In the first game, the HC "Dniprolyanka" against "Econom-University", it was found that 35.7% of athletes had an average level of mental readiness, 50% had above the average, and 14.3% had a high level (Table 3). In our opinion, the indexes were adequate for this game. The "Econom-University" team, at this stage of the competition, was the outsider of the championship tournament table. For the Kherson team, there were no grounds for excitement, all the girls knew it well, but the responsibility for the outcome of the game still laid on their shoulders, so they were not allowed to give themselves a weakness. Infusion of team players was concentrated. All athletes dominated the optimal level of emotional excitement, before the game, the girls smiled and joked with each other and with the coach. There was a desire to fight towards the end to achieve a common goal and victory, so there was no thought about defeat.

The ability to manage their actions, feelings and behaviour did not hurt any of the athletes. However, in this game, there were obvious leaders. The right midweek player and part-time mainstream defender Daryna S. and right-wing far player Julia T. in this game were distinguished by a high level of mental readiness and their brilliant game. We can note that most team players had a sufficient level of mental readiness to compete against this rival, that is, athletes were in combat readiness, which is very important in games of this level. In the second game of the HC "Dniprolyanka" against HC "Real" (opponent equal in class), we found that 20% of the teams had an average level of psychological readiness for the competition and 80% had above the average. It is worth noting that these 80% are mainly players of the main team of "Dniprolyanka", those are the players responsible for the outcome of the match. They play almost all the game without a substitute, without fear, take on the initiative of the game, even making mistakes and listening to the displeasure of the coach, do not drop their hands and continue to fight for victory. The other 20% are second-class players and young players who compete to show them, first of all, the level of responsibility, as well as gain

experience and experience the "taste of the game" in adult competitions. This game was very responsible and, in turn, fundamental, because HC "Real", we can say, "was breathing down their neck" according to the results of the tournament table. The victory gave our team the opportunity to finally consolidate on the 3rd stage of the championship tournament table among Super League. The infusion of the team was highly focused. All athletes dominated the optimal level of emotional excitement, sometimes experiences were noted, but not significant. Before the game, the girls talked about the upcoming game, cheered with each other and consulted with the coach about the nuances of the game. There was a desire to fight towards the end to achieve a common goal and victory, because the price of the victory was high. Managing the actions, feelings and behaviour in some periods of the game was very difficult not only for athletes, but also for the coach, but they managed to remain cool and concentrated. It may be noted that most "Dniprolyanka" team players were in high combat readiness.

According to the results of the investigation of the third game of the HC "Dniprolyanka" against the HC "Galichanka" (the team of the highest class), 61.5% of the team players had an average level of psychological readiness for the competition and 38.5% had above the average. It is possible to note that the "Galichanka" team is an unattainable leader in the championship, playing with this team is always very difficult, athletes are experienced, played with each other to trivialities, the level of preparation for each of the players of the Lviv team exceeds the level of training of our players, and this is obvious, because their team repeatedly participated in international competitions, European Championships, Challenge Cup and Baltic League. A large group of players of HC "Galichanka" are representatives of national teams of the country, while we have much less of them. But it's nice to note that sober confidence in the forces of the team "Dniprolyanka" was at a sufficient level, so all players and coaches knew well that the goal of the team in this game was not to win at all costs, but to play no less than their strength, improve tactics of attack and defence, and give the chance to young players to show themselves. Therefore, the indexes of psychological readiness of the HC "Dniprolyanka" players for the competition are adequate for this game. The desire to fight for victory was found to be medium and low. The optimal level of emotional excitement and resistance to disturbing factors also manifested itself at an average level. But the ability to manage their actions, feelings and behaviour was at an adequate level. This suggests that athletes successfully completed the coach's advice. Achieving the full (high level) psychological readiness of handball players for the competition is difficult because of the fact that there are many young athletes in the team. Also, there is always dynamism when it comes to the states of mental readiness, namely: the transition from one level to another. Therefore, the higher the level of mental readiness, the more stable it becomes and, accordingly, the athletes in the competitions are better.

Table 3: Mental readiness for the competition of "Dniproanka" handball players in games against Super League teams of Ukraine

Team	Level	Low	Below average	Average	Above average	High
Econom- University, Ternopil		-	-	35.7	50	14.3
Real, Mykolaiv		-	-	20	80	-
Halychanka, Lviv		-	-	61.5	38.5	-

In the first game, the HC "Dniproanka" against "Econom-University", it was found that 35.7% of athletes had an average level of mental readiness, 50% had above the average, and 14.3% had a high level (Table 3). In our opinion, the indexes were adequate for this game. The "Econom-University" team, at this stage of the competition, was the outsider of the championship tournament table. For the Kherson team, there were no grounds for excitement, all the girls knew it well, but the responsibility for the outcome of the game still laid on their shoulders, so they were not allowed to give themselves a weakness. Infusion of team players was concentrated. All athletes dominated the optimal level of emotional excitement, before the game, the girls smiled and joked with each other and with the coach. There was a desire to fight towards the end to achieve a common goal and victory, so there was no thought about defeat. The ability to manage their actions, feelings and behaviour did not hurt any of the athletes. However, in this game, there were obvious leaders. The right midweek player and part-time mainstream defender Daryna S. and right-wing far player Julia T. in this game were distinguished by a high level of mental readiness and their brilliant game. We can note that most team players had a sufficient level of mental readiness to compete against this rival, that is, athletes were in combat readiness, which is very important in games of this level.

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and experience the "taste of the game" in adult competitions. This game was very responsible and, in turn, fundamental, because HC "Real", we can say, "was breathing down their neck" according to the results of the tournament table. The victory gave our team the opportunity to finally consolidate on the 3rd stage of the championship tournament table among Super League. The infusion of the team was highly focused. All athletes dominated the optimal level of emotional excitement, sometimes experiences were noted, but not significant. Before the game, the girls talked about the upcoming game, cheered with each other and consulted with the coach about the nuances of the game. There was a desire to fight towards the end to achieve a common goal and victory, because the price of the victory was high. Managing the actions, feelings and behaviour in some periods of the game was very difficult not only for athletes, but also for the coach, but they managed to remain cool and concentrated. It may be noted that most "Dniproanka" team players were in high combat readiness.

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CONCLUSION

Athlete's mental readiness is an important component of the success of competitive activities. It represents one of the athlete's mental states which includes certain attributes: a sober self-confidence; the desire to fight to achieve the goal; optimal level of emotional excitement; noise immunity against knock down factors; the ability to manage their actions and behaviour. These features became the basis for developing the author's method for assessing the pre-competition psychological readiness of handball players. Due to the developed method and application of reliable psychological tests and questionnaires, the readiness levels of the HC "Dniproanka" handball players for competitions with rivals of different classes were determined. The dynamism of the handball players' psychological readiness for the competition did not decrease even with a very strong rival - the team of HC "Galichanka". That is, the achieved level of mental readiness can be considered sustainable and stable. This gives grounds for asserting that Kherson handball players are confident in their pre-start period, and during the competition they are persistently and fully capable of fighting to achieve the goal.

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PSIHOLOŠKA SPREMNOST IGRAČA RUKOMETA NA TAKMIČENJE

Spremnost sportista na takmičenje je obilježena nizom karakteristika (funkcionalnih, mentalnih, fizičkih, tehničkih i taktičkih, itd.) koje se očituju u svom jedinstvu. Cilj: utvrditi spremnost igrača rukometa na takmičenje sa protivnicima koji pripadaju drugoj grupi. Materijali i metode: istraživanje je provedeno na osnovu Srednje škole za fizičku kulturu iz Hersona. "Dniprojanka" ženski rukometni tim Super lige je bio uključen u istraživanje, te se sastojao od 15 rukometnih igrača u dobi od 19 do 32 godine starosti. Sports Masters iz Ukrajine su bili kontingent tima. Istraživanje je trajalo 3 godine (2015.-2017.), provedeno je u tri faze, te je imalo oblik posmatranja, psihološkog testiranja i popunjavanja upitnika. Rezultati: istraživanje psihološke spremnosti na takmičenje rukometnog tima "Dniprojanka" je provedeno tokom utakmica sa timovima Super lige iz Ukrajine, a koji se od njih razlikuju po pitanju atletskih vještina i iskustva. Prema tome, 35,7% igrača rukometa je imalo prosječni nivo mentalne spremnosti, 50% je bilo iznad prosjeka, a 14,3% je imalo visok nivo mentalne spremnosti tokom utakmice između rukometnog kluba "Dniprojanka" i rukometnog kluba "Econom-University" (tim koji pripada nižoj grupi). Tokom utakmice protiv rukometnog kluba "Real" (tim koji pripada istoj grupi), 20% igrača je imalo prosječan nivo psihološke spremnosti za takmičenje, a 80% je bilo iznad prosjeka. Tokom utakmice protiv rukometnog kluba "Galichanka" (tim koji pripada višoj grupi), 61,5% rukometnih igrača je imalo prosječan nivo mentalne spremnosti za takmičenje, a 38,5% je bilo iznad prosjeka. Zaključci: postignuti nivo mentalne spremnosti se može smatrati održivim i stabilnim. Ovim se dokazuje da su igrači rukometa iz Hersona samouvjereni tokom perioda prije početka takmičenja, a tokom takmičenja su neprekidno i potpuno sposobni da se bore za ostvarenje cilja.

Ključne riječi: tjeskoba, uzbuđenje, inhibicije, emocije, samouvjerenost

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