PROBLEMS IN THE TRAINING OF CHINESE RHYTHMIC GYMNASTS

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Introduction
The Chinese National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team has set two goals – for the 2004 Olympic Games (Greece), the goal is to qualify for the next round of competitions and even to rank the first six; for the 2008 Olympic Games (Beijing), the goal is to rank the first three. To achieve these two goals, the Chinese National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team as a second or even third-class team in the world must, first of all, catch up with the world level through a perfect training system for standardized training.

Methods
237 subjects were selected for the present research, including coaches and athletes from the Chinese National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, the retired Chinese gymnastics masters who participated from 1983 to 2003 in the Olympic Games, international championships, intercontinental competitions or Chinese National Games, coaches from different provinces, medical staff and experts in the field of rhythmic gymnastics. Classification, calculation and data analysis are made after careful studies of the training program for the Chinese National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, the after-competition summary reports and 60 daily records of training for the selected Olympic contestants.

Results
1. The Chinese rhythmic gymnasts are weak in athletic skills:
The research and statistics show that priority should be given to the improvements of the training system and the coaches’ overall qualifications.
2. Factors in training
The results of the research show that the improvement of athletic skills is determined by skill factor, quality factor, training arrangements factor, work load factor and physical injury factor.

2.1 poor basic skills and physical quality

Table 1. Comparison between each training stage and the syllabus for rhythmic gymnastics (subjects: 69 athletes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stage of training</th>
<th>age at training (years)</th>
<th>years of training</th>
<th>age at training (years)</th>
<th>years of training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rudimentary training</td>
<td>9.01±3.02</td>
<td>1.83±1.40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic training</td>
<td>10.80±2.05</td>
<td>1.79±1.03</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special training</td>
<td>12.40±2.32</td>
<td>2.85±1.30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The shortened process of training with quick end of basic training and early start of special training is no other than a hidden peril to an athlete’s later career and success. Another obstacle to the athletic level of China’s rhythmic gymnastics is insufficient improvement of physical quality.

2.2 unreasonable training arrangements

Table 2. Average training load of active and retired Chinese gymnasts (n = 82 persons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>load parameter</th>
<th>training stage</th>
<th>basic training</th>
<th>special training</th>
<th>top-level training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>duration of training class (hours)</td>
<td>4.41±1.87</td>
<td>5.53±2.08</td>
<td>6.85±4.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daily training class (periods)</td>
<td>5.87±2.50</td>
<td>7.37±2.77</td>
<td>8.42±2.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training exercises per week</td>
<td>10.37±3.48</td>
<td>11.67±4.38</td>
<td>12.24±3.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impractical demands and unscientifically intensified training at the stage of basic training in order to raise the athletic level have led to poor qualifications and low rate of success of China’s top rhythmic gymnasts, and have consequently constituted another important reason for the low level of gymnastic training as a whole.

2.3 physical injury
Physical injury is incurred mainly from the regular technique training. It is often possible for a rhythmic gymnast to suffer severe injuries to the waist and ankles, moderate injuries to the waist, insteps, knees and ankles, and minor injuries to the insteps, ankle joints, waist and shoulder joints. Generally speaking, the most easily injured parts are waist, ankles, insteps, knees and shoulders.

Conclusions
1. The factors in training are considerably responsible for the comparative weakness in athletic skills of China’s rhythmic gymnastics.
2. The gap in training level between Chinese rhythmic gymnasts and world-class athletes is caused by insufficiency of training at each stage, poor basic skills of the gymnasts, insufficiency of physical quality training, overload in special training and serious injury in physical exercises.
3. It is the most pressing task at present to work out a scientific, standardized and systematic training program for China’s rhythmic gymnastics.

References