

Beauty and aesthetic appeal of sports: aesthetic training of athletes

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Abstract

Objective of the study was to reveal the aesthetic education standards in student community and their need for basic aesthetic education in the physical education curriculum.

Methods and structure of the study. We sampled for the questionnaire survey the 4-year students (n=120) from the Yekaterinburg Institute of Physical Culture's Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Departments majoring in Physical Education discipline.

Results and conclusion. Having analyzed the questionnaire survey data in the context of the ongoing aestheticization of the professional sports, we would make the following preliminary conclusions. First it should be emphasized that the physical education faculties and students recognize the need for modern aesthetic education in the professional training systems, with such education being particularly beneficial for the sports managing community. Second, there is a clear need for a broad discussion of a basic aesthetic education curriculum for the physical education universities – that should cover the whole academic study period on an uninterrupted basis. And third, there is a growing need for the modern aesthetic education and training methods and models as complementary to the traditional academic physical education curriculum. The traditional studies and lectures, no matter how important they are, are not always sensitive to the ever-changing demands of the student community, and should give way to a range of modern interactive training tools. These transformations deserve special attention and support from the academic educational system management.

It should be also emphasized that modern education should not prioritize the notorious competences as such anymore, since every trainee's individuality should be respected and personality progress facilitated by a variety of education tools including modern aesthetic education and training ones – that expand the professional limitations and facilitate individual progresses by improvements in harmony and synergy of the physical and spiritual growth process.

Keywords: *beauty, professional sport, attraction, aesthetic education, aesthetic training.*

Background. Modern sports have evolved into a global phenomenon playing special social roles with multiple effects on the individual and social lifestyles and the relevant economic, political, geopolitical, artistic, communicative and other aspects and influences from and on communities the world over. One of the key individual priorities and attractions in the aesthetic domain is beauty as one of the most general and leading aesthetic notions, with the modern sports being definitely not alien to it. Beauty of modern sport disciplines is appreciated not only by sports professionals, analysts and researchers, but also by the fan communities that rank it high among the competitive values and appeal; particularly when its elements in the routines and combinationions are emphasized by

the sports commentators, all the more that the artistic merits are often critical for success in a number of sports. It is not unusual for the modern sports communities to run contests of the best goals, best matches and combinations – e.g. in chess and some other sports.

The role of beauty in sports may be analyzed in the following two aspects: (1) beauty of a sport discipline as its genuine and essential element; and (2) inflow of beauty from outside to a sport discipline. As for the first aspect, it has always been of special interest for researchers as demonstrated by the relevant study reports [1, 4, 5]. It is a common knowledge that since ancient times the popular athletes have often provided models for artistic masterpieces; as the arts, as



provided by N.G. Chernyshevsky, have always been sensitive to the commonly appreciated things and values. The never ending attention of arts to sports and athleticism on the whole is indicative of the central role played by sports in the individual and communal lifestyles and agendas [7, 9, 10]. Arts cannot but respond and reflect the emotional dramas of fierce competitions with triumphs of the winners and despairs of the losers, being always inspired by beauty of an athletic body, its movement plasticity and elegance. Of special popular interest the world over is the ongoing discussions of whether or not some sports may be ranked with arts [2, 7, 10].

The second aspect is particularly relevant when a sport is viewed and analyzed as a show, with the fans watching competitions as spectacles in an organic emotional unity with the competitors. In the modern terminology, a spectator may be qualified a sport product consumer or client of the sports industry – often rather influential on the sports techniques, strategies and tactics, particularly in the team sports. Needs and demands of the fan community, its tastes, aesthetic ideals and expectations and the whole support and devotion culture as such comprise a necessary element or seasoning of the sports show. This interdependence of the fans and competitors is particularly high for the modern professional sports and their commercial aspects. Competitors in the popular team sports on the whole and football in particular (commonly referred to as the team sport No. 1) now and then emphasize that they always ‘play for the fans’, and commentators replicate this statement to inspire the athletes and make them feel heroes of a virtually theatrical performance. This cultural phenomenon is promoted as a sort of show by the global mass media, with the public interest heated up to fever prior to the Olympic Games and other major events, with repercussions in the smaller-scale local events.

It is not unusual, therefore, that the purely competitive elements have to give way to a degree to some other aspects, dominated by the social ones. As was mentioned by J. Huizinga, “professional performance is virtually never limited by the competitive agenda only, since professionals are never free to act spontaneously and carelessly” [8, 222]. No wonder that this aspect often triggers conflicts. When the notorious footballer A. Arshavin responded to a criticism of the fans “your expectations is your problem”, these words were in fact a sort of protest against habitual dilution

of the sporting mission, focuses and priorities by the sports-unrelated elements.

This new reality of the modern sports urges the sports community to give a higher priority to their aesthetic aspects – even if they seem foreign for the essence and mission of the sport. They may be perceived as a kind of ‘aesthetic jewelry’ which mission is to lure as many spectators as possible, since beauty and aesthetic appeals of some sports may be rather influential and emotional and, hence, rather important for the public appreciation and support.

The growing priority to beauty of sports, and the efforts to promote and emphasize their beauty beyond the purely sporting and competitive aspects may be seen as manifestations of the sports aestheticization process. The growing awareness of this tendency in professional sports urges the sport communities to analyze the role and benefits of aesthetic education in the academic physical education system.

Objective of the study was to reveal the aesthetic education standards in student community and their need for basic aesthetic education in the physical education curriculum.

Methods and structure of the study. We sampled for the questionnaire survey the 4-year students (n=120) from the Yekaterinburg Institute of Physical Culture’s Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Departments majoring in Physical Education discipline.

Results and discussion. The key question “What the beauty of sports means for you?” was mostly responded as follows: execution elegance; technical perfection; professionalism; harmony; movement coordination, perfect teamwork, etc. The history of aesthetics give multiple definitions of beauty albeit they are dominated by the idea of natural harmony i.e. perfect compliance with the laws of nature. Therefore, every single combination – e.g. in football – is commonly rated perfect when it meets a range of specific criteria including the execution precision, technical perfection of the reception and passing sequence, passing efficiency with the shortest way to goal, unpredictable feints and, last but not least, scoring efficiency, i.e. goals. Having considered the responses in the above context, we have grounds to believe that the sample realizes the essence of beauty in sports and, hence, demonstrates certain aesthetic feel and standards.

The question “What is the role of beauty in sports for you?” was responded as follows: “Beauty is a natural element of every sport” (30%); “Beauty is an appealing addition” (63.5%); “Beauty contributes to the



commercial benefits" (5.5%); and "Uncertain" (1%). This means that virtually 94% of the sample demonstrated good understanding of beauty in sports and its benefits for the competitive progress.

The question "Do you feel that sports aesthetics need to be prioritized in athletic trainings?" was responded as follows: "Yes, for sure" (20.5%); "Desirable" (44%); "Not needed" (11%); "It may hamper trainings" (11%); and "Uncertain" (13.5%).

Having summarized the pros and cons of an aesthetic education in the professional training systems found by the questionnaire survey, we have grounds to say that the student community not only understands the need for aesthetic education but also demonstrates a sort of demand for aesthetic education in the physical education curriculum.

Of special interest were also responses to the question "How important, as you feel, are the athlete's efforts if any to shape up and improve the personal image?" that were as follows: "Rather important for competitive success" (13%); "Important to a degree albeit not for the results" (46%); "Actually unimportant for the athletic performance" (13%); "Important rather for the career than for competitive progress" (10%); "Make no difference" (10%); and "Uncertain" (8%).

And the question "Do you believe that artistic works that praise sports encourage progress in willpower and success motivations?" was responded as follows: "Yes, and largely" (23%); "Yes, they provide an extra incentive" (70%); "I don't think so, they make no effect" (4%); "No, they are harmful as they distort the sports reality" (2%); and "Uncertain" (1%).

Conclusion. Having analyzed the questionnaire survey data in the context of the ongoing aestheticization of the professional sports, we would make the following preliminary conclusions. First it should be emphasized that the physical education faculties and students recognize the need for modern aesthetic education in the professional training systems, with such education being particularly beneficial for the sports managing community. Second, there is a clear need for a broad discussion of a basic aesthetic edu-

cation curriculum for the physical education universities – that should cover the whole academic study period on an uninterrupted basis. And third, there is a growing need for the modern aesthetic education and training methods and models as complementary to the traditional academic physical education curriculum. The traditional studies and lectures, no matter how important they are, are not always sensitive to the ever-changing demands of the student community, and should give way to a range of modern interactive training tools. These transformations deserve special attention and support from the academic education system management.

It should be also emphasized that modern education should not prioritize the notorious competences as such anymore, since every trainee's individuality should be respected and personality progress facilitated by a variety of education tools including modern aesthetic education and training ones – that expand the professional limitations and facilitate individual progresses by improvements in harmony and synergy of the physical and spiritual growth process.

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