IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL PREPARATION LEVELS OF MIDDLE-DISTANCE RUNNERS

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Abstract: *This study focuses on the effectiveness of technical and tactical indicators of middle-distance runners in relation to their sports performance.*

Keywords: *Physical training, sports stages, strength endurance, training efficiency.*

INTRODUCTION. Advanced pedagogical experiences accumulated in sports practice indicate that the phases of the athlete preparation system are directly dependent on the proper organization of training sessions, which significantly impact competition performance outcomes.

However, existing flaws and shortcomings in the athlete preparation system today negatively affect the improvement of sports results. Traditional training methods for sports reserves lack efficiency, and the control over preparation across various training stages in long-term training cycles needs continuous enhancement. This objective contradiction between outdated methodologies and the need for performance improvement is one of the key challenges faced in modern sports preparation. Such deficiencies often lead to national team athletes underperforming in international competitions.

METHODS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The technical preparation level of runners is determined by the efficiency and economy of their movements. The analysis of running technique is based on a movement unit consisting of two steps or a cycle. Each cycle consists of two support phases (using the left and right foot) and two flight phases.

During running, internal and external forces interact, including environmental resistance, gravitational force, and ground reaction force. As a result, the runner's body experiences continuous vertical and horizontal oscillations. One of the key tasks of a runner is to maintain a straight movement trajectory, minimizing unnecessary lateral and vertical oscillations.

An ideal running technique is characterized by smooth and efficient movements, with minimal abrupt force exertion while advancing in a straight line. This is achieved by maintaining a slight knee bend, landing on the forefoot, and then transitioning to full foot contact. Foot placement should be as straight as possible, avoiding outward rotation to minimize lateral oscillations. Proper propulsion requires full alignment of joints, allowing the leg to swing forward naturally. The knee should rise to an optimal height depending on the running distance—the longer the distance, the lower the knee lift. The lower leg should remain relaxed throughout the movement.

During running, the arms should be bent at approximately a right angle at the elbows. This positioning may vary slightly, but for middle- and long-distance running, the primary function of the arms is to maintain balance and stabilize the torso.

RESULTS

The key components of running technique include stride length and frequency. These factors must be optimized to ensure natural and rhythmic running mechanics. Practical results indicate that the average stride length for leading athletes in 800m races is around 2.00–2.10m, while for 1500m races, it is approximately 1.90–2.00m.

For middle-distance races, a high start technique is typically used, except when running on separate lanes. Speed acquisition usually occurs within the first 30–40 meters, where an athlete's movements resemble those of a sprinter. When running on curves, athletes slightly lean forward, the right foot is positioned inward, and the right elbow is extended outward.

Breathing is conducted through both the nose and mouth, with breathing rhythm synchronized with running rhythm. As the body's oxygen demand increases, breathing frequency must also increase accordingly.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In competitive races, athletes with comparable strength levels often participate, making tactical preparedness a decisive factor in achieving victory. Properly assessing the characteristics of the chosen distance, personal abilities, training level, psychological preparedness, and opponents' strengths are crucial aspects of race strategy.

Athletes set various tactical objectives during training and competitions, such as maintaining a specific pace over multiple laps, securing a strategic position within a pack, overtaking competitors at key moments, adjusting running rhythm, or accelerating in the final segment of the race.

For instance, in 800m races, pacing distribution follows a structured approach. Typically, the second 400m is completed 3–4 seconds slower than the first. If an athlete aims for a total time of 2:02.0 minutes, the first 400m is expected to be completed in approximately 59.0 seconds, and the second in 63.0 seconds. Similarly, for a time of 1:56.0 minutes, the splits would be 56.4 and 59.6 seconds. However, pacing strategies should remain adaptable rather than rigidly fixed.

CONCLUSIONS. In middle- and long-distance running, specialized endurance is a primary determinant of success. Training across different paces and time frames plays a crucial role in endurance development. Preparation follows a wave-like structure, where each phase marks a new level of an athlete's conditioning. To achieve continuous improvement, training plans must incorporate new methodologies and refine existing ones.

Long-term preparation of elite middle-distance runners requires periodic adjustments to training cycles, planned use of training tools, workload management, competition performance evaluation, and recovery strategies to sustain peak performance.

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