



ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPECTS OF CHEERLEADING DISCIPLINES IN BULGARIAN HIGHER SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

In this work, a brief historical review of the origin of cheerleading in the world, analysis of origin and development in higher schools in our country has been presented. Conclusions made out of the information available, give us a reason to deem that cheerleading dances are an attractive discipline that would be of interest for students and have a big potential for development and expanding of the scope of sport activities in Bulgarian higher schools.

Key words: cheerleading, motor activity, student's sport, cheerleaders

INTRODUCTION

The decreased motor activity is one the most significant problem of contemporary human being and is of big social, biological and public importance, influencing the student's youth to a great extent. We all are unanimous that the attended hours set in the curriculum in Bulgarian schools are insufficient to build the necessary knowledge and skills among students, to influence their physical training and physical activity in order to form healthy, viable and mentally stable young people (1). Universities offer various sport disciplines to their students, depending on the confirmed curriculum, staff ensured and conditions of the material-technical base, but it is necessary to look for possibilities for breaking up the stereotype. One of these possibilities could be found in the not so popular among Bulgarian higher schools cheerleading disciplines. Cheerleading dances are an activity where the participants (called cheerleaders) cheer their team, as a form of encouragement. It can vary from shouting slogans to intensive physical

activity – rhythmic gymnastics of several minutes duration including choreography, gymnastic components, jumps, cheering on and aerial acrobatics, implemented with music accompaniment (2). Cheerleading could be practiced for motivation of sport teams, public entertainment or as a competitive discipline.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this work is to establish if the cheerleading is popular and if it is practiced by Bulgarian students.

Tasks of the investigation:

1. In this connection, we have carried out an investigation regarding the origin of cheerleading dances in the world and Bulgaria, and their development in higher schools.

Methods of investigation

1. Processing and analysis of the data from scientific-methodical literature. Cheerleading originated in 1860 in Great Britain and became popular in the USA two decades later, as fully male activity. The term „cheer leader” has been used since 1897 when the managers of Princeton's football team have appointed three students for cheer leaders – Thomas, Easton and Guerin who had to shout slogans for the team during trainings too. Special

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sections for cheer leaders have been made for each of the teams – hosts and guests.

Official date of birth of the organized cheerleading is 2nd November, 1898. Immediately after that, the University of Minnesota organized a cheerleader's team of six male students, who use the original spirits of Kemble to this day too. In 1903, the first cheerleading fellowship – Gamma Sigma was found.

Not until 1923, women joined and took part for the first time in the University of Minnesota. During this decade, drums, megaphones and acrobatic elements in the compositions came into use – actual in these days too (3).

In 1948, Lawrence Herkimer from Dallas (Texas) founded the National Cheerleading Association (NCA), and in 1949 the first school for cheerleaders in Huntsville, Texas with 52 girls was established. He has contributed for the remarkable appearance of cheerleaders founding a company for uniforms Cheerleader & Danz Team, he has figured out the jump „herkie” and last but not least, he has invented the "Spirit Stick".

In 50-ties, the forming of professional cheerleaders started. The first cheerleading team filed in the National football league (NFL) in the history was Baltimore Colt.

Gradually, the cheerleading has gained popularity all over the world and is practiced mainly by girls in child-adolescent age. The first cheerleading dances championship was aired on TV in 1978 (4).

80-ties noted the beginning of modern cheerleading, programmes of high difficulty were demonstrated, including elements of acrobatics and gymnastics combined with choreography. They differentiate in two main directions – parade and sport cheerleaders.

In the end of 20th century, the term cheerleading was imposed for the direction sport cheerleaders. Cheerleading became independent as a sport. In

1998, the International Federation of Cheerleading was founded, and the first world championship was held in 2001 in Tokyo.

The beginning of cheerleading in Bulgaria started by parade cheerleading structures formed to the brass bands before 30-40-ties. The analysis of the information available makes us think that this type of sport activity has a wide scope of distribution – from kindergartens to the pensioner clubs. Almost in all kindergartens and schools there are cheerleading structures that take part at events of different character. Festivals are held with local and international participation in the directions parade and sport cheerleaders.

Of the role and significance of the cheerleading dances among the growing ups we could judge from the developed innovation programme of education of children from 3 to 12 years in the Sport Academy “Tom and Jerry” formed to the Bulgarian Sport Federation and works on programmes of FIFA and UEFA (5).

It is less known to the wide public that Bulgaria has its European champions in the name of the cheerleaders from Shumen town. In Lillehammer, the competitors from “Rhythmic” club won the champion's title in the discipline "Traditional corpus" in category "Junior" (14-16 years). They won bronze medals in "Traditional Corpus" in category "Juvenile", as well as in the discipline "Parade corpus" in category "Junior". The total number of participants in cheerleading structures is 2100 from eight countries (6).

In the last decade, an increased interest in this sport manifestation is noticed in higher schools. The first university cheerleading team is formed up with Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, Sofia in 2001, with leader Gergana. In 2010, the competitors of SU took part in the International tournament „EuroMilano”, where they ranked fifth position, and a year later in the same competition, they won the silver medals. Girls presented the cheerleading dances in front of the University „Gotse Delchev“, in Stip, Macedonia – 2014 (**Picture 1**).



Picture 1. The team of SU

Following the example of SU,, In 2007 in the Department „Gymnastics“, the including of a new elective discipline was voted (ED) „Musical Rhythmic Gymnastics“ (MRG – cheerleaders) (7), who made the cheerleading dances popular in the National Academy of Sports „Vasil Levski “. In 2012, the team of NAS „ V. Levski“ with trainer Irina Nesheva for the first time took part

at the International field, where it ranked 12th „World Interuniversity Tournament “– Rome, Italy, two years later the girls were champions again in the same tournament, and in 2016 after participation at „ Paris Challenger“, they ranked first (8). **(Picture 2).**



Picture 2. The team of NSA – champions from „EuroRoma” 2012

The third initiator of cheerleading in Bulgarian universities is the University of National and World Economy, Sofia.

In the beginning of 2013, a cheerleading dances team was formed up with trainers Milena Ignatova and Nadia Tsvetkova. Girls are students of various

specialties, but the interest in sport united them and as a result of their system training occupations they achieved their first international success. On the international student's games in Belgrade in October, for the 8th time they won the champion title.

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This achievement fired them with ambition for still more deliberate and responsible approach to the training processes and the results were not long. On the international student's tournament „EuroRoma” – 2013, at the condition of serious competition, the team of the UNWE ranked second (**Picture 3**).



Picture 3. The team of the UNWE - „EuroRoma“ – 2013

After two years of tenacious work, the girls won gold medals too, at the prestigious international tournament „Euro Zagreb Mladost Open”,

followed by silver medals in 2016 in Madrid, and bronze ones in Valencia, 2017 (**Picture 4**).



Picture 4. The team of the UNWE – champion from „Euro Zagreb Mladost open” – 2015

In 2018, a new structure appeared on the cheerleading scene, founded by Maya Chipeva, it is the team of TU, Sofia.

After the numerous participations and titles won by the team at international tournaments, and the lack of manifestations in Bulgaria, in 2016,

Physical culture and sports department at the UNWE made the first attempt for organizing a student's cheerleading dances championship, which culminated by failure. Two years later, in Sofia, under the aegis of the Association of University Sport, the first National University Championship was held, in which the teams of three universities participated (NAS, SU, TU), the female competitors of SU, „St. Kliment Ohridski“, became champions. In 2019, the

discipline was included in the programme of the National Universiade in Varna and in October, 2020 at the conditions of an extreme situation of Covid 19, in Sofia, the second NU Championship was organized on cheerleading dances. In the competition, the female cheerleaders won the first rank, second rank was taken by the team of NAS „V. Levski“, and the third one was taken by the competitors of SU (**Picture 5**).



Picture 5. Prize-winners from National University Championship – Sofia, 2020

CONCLUSIONS

From the analyzed data about the origin and development of cheerleading disciplines in Bulgaria, and higher schools in particular, we could summarize that it is a specific motor activity with great application in all age groups, possessing beauty, dynamics and attractiveness. According to Minkovska G., „As a result of the inquiry survey carried out, it has been proved that students would like for the cheerleading dances to be a part of the sport calendar of different organizations in their countries., (9).

With the purpose of changing the stereotype model, attracting the attention of students and offering of new possibilities for physical activity in higher schools, we recommend for making the cheerleading dances popular, forming up of teams, organizing and participation at student's national championships and international tournaments.

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