A Multi-dimensional Approach to Support Youth Taekwondo Athletes

Laura Capranica¹*, Salvatore Chiodo², Antonio Tessitore¹

¹Department of Human Movement, Human and Health, University of Rome Foro Italico, Italy
²Italian Taekwondo Federation (FITA), Italy

Abstract

Purpose: Youth Taekwondo competitions vary in relation to age and technical level of the athletes. However, the assumption that a scaled-down approach of adult competitions facilitates the development of youth athletes is not necessarily substantiated with field-based research. Therefore, the aim of this study was to present: 1) a multi-dimensional research approach to official youth Taekwondo competitions, including psychophysiological responses and technical-tactical behaviors; 2) aspects relevant to the selection of talented youth athletes; and 3) the best practices to support the holistic development of talented athletes in pursuing high performance sport and academic careers (e.g., dual careers).

Methods: Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to investigate Italian youth Taekwondo athletes (aged 10-17 years) during official youth competitions and during a selection period. Furthermore, European dual career policies for athletes were analyzed.

Results: Despite the high psychophysiological demands of official youth Taekwondo competitions, children tend to perceive moderate match-related efforts. During a training camp, selected athletes perceived lower efforts with respect to non-selected camps despite no difference in performance and mood between subgroups. Although the European Parliament and Commission prioritize the holistic development of elite athletes, different approaches are in place in Europe, ranging from state-centric regulations to laisser-faire/no formal structures.

Conclusions: The multidimensional research approach to Taekwondo highlighted that the assessment of the athlete’s perceived efforts during training and competition could help coaches monitor their training programs and apply effective recovery strategies between matches. Athletes should be supported in their holistic development by combining sport and education.

KEYWORDS
rating of perceived efforts, match analysis, psychophysiological responses, dual career

*Corresponding author: Laura Capranica, University of Rome Foro Italico, P.za Lauro de Bosis, 15, 00135 Rome, Italy. Email: laura.capranica@uniroma4.it

ISSN 2383-5958 online © 2017 The Journal of the International Association for Taekwondo Research