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PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS BEFORE COMPETITIONS

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Annotation. This scientific article examines the psychological preparation of volleyball players before competitions and its importance in achieving high sports performance. Modern volleyball requires not only physical and technical-tactical readiness but also strong psychological stability. The article analyzes the main psychological factors affecting athletes before competitions, including motivation, emotional stability, self-confidence, stress resistance, concentration, and teamwork psychology.

Keywords: volleyball, psychological preparation, competition stress, motivation, emotional stability, mental training, sports psychology, self-confidence, teamwork, concentration.

Аннотация. В данной научной статье рассматривается психологическая подготовка волейболистов перед соревнованиями и ее значение для достижения высоких спортивных результатов. Современный волейбол требует не только физической и технико-тактической подготовленности, но и высокой психологической устойчивости. В статье анализируются основные психологические факторы, влияющие на спортсменов перед соревнованиями, включая мотивацию, эмоциональную стабильность, уверенность в себе, стрессоустойчивость, концентрацию и психологию командной работы.

Ключевые слова: волейбол, психологическая подготовка, соревновательный стресс, мотивация, эмоциональная устойчивость, психическая тренировка, спортивная психология, уверенность в себе, командная работа, концентрация.

Volleyball is one of the most dynamic and emotionally demanding team sports in the modern world. Success in volleyball competitions depends not only on the athlete's physical preparedness and technical skills but also on psychological readiness. During competitions, volleyball players often experience emotional tension, anxiety, fear of failure, and psychological pressure. Such conditions may negatively affect the quality of technical and tactical actions during the game.

Today, sports psychology has become an essential component of athlete preparation. Coaches and sports psychologists increasingly recognize the importance of developing athletes' mental resilience alongside physical qualities. Psychological preparation helps athletes maintain emotional balance, increase confidence, improve concentration, and effectively overcome stressful situations during competitions.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical and practical foundations of psychological preparation of volleyball players before competitions and to study modern methods used in sports psychology for improving competitive performance.

Psychological preparation refers to the process of developing an athlete's mental qualities necessary for successful participation in sports competitions. According to sports psychologist Yuri Hanin, emotional control and optimal psychological states are among the key factors influencing athletic success.

Foreign scholars such as R. Martens and D. Weinberg emphasized that psychological readiness includes several important components:

- motivation;
- self-confidence;
- emotional stability;

- concentration of attention;
- stress resistance;
- teamwork and communication.

Uzbek researchers in physical education and sports science also highlight the importance of psychological preparation in athlete development. According to Uzbek scholars, the formation of psychological stability among young athletes contributes significantly to their sports achievements and social adaptation.

In volleyball, athletes constantly interact with teammates and react quickly to changing game situations. Therefore, psychological readiness becomes an important condition for effective tactical cooperation and successful performance.

Motivation is one of the most important psychological factors influencing volleyball players before competitions. Highly motivated athletes demonstrate greater persistence, confidence, and emotional control during games.

Sports psychologists distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises from the athlete's personal interest and satisfaction from playing volleyball, while extrinsic motivation is related to rewards, recognition, and external encouragement.

Coaches play a crucial role in maintaining athletes' motivation before competitions. Positive communication, encouragement, and realistic goal-setting help players remain psychologically stable.

Competition anxiety. Competition anxiety is a common psychological phenomenon among volleyball players. Athletes may experience nervousness, fear of mistakes, increased heart rate, and emotional instability before important matches. Moderate anxiety may positively influence performance by increasing alertness and concentration. However, excessive anxiety negatively affects decision-making and coordination during the game. According to Martens' Competitive Anxiety Theory, athletes with high levels of cognitive anxiety often demonstrate decreased sports performance under pressure.

Common symptoms of competition anxiety include:

- muscle tension;
- sleep disturbances;
- loss of concentration;
- emotional irritability;
- reduced self-confidence.

Managing anxiety is therefore an essential part of psychological preparation.

Self-confidence. Self-confidence is another significant factor affecting volleyball players' performance. Confident athletes demonstrate greater initiative, better tactical decisions, and stronger emotional stability during competitions.

Self-confidence is formed through:

- successful sports experience;
- positive feedback from coaches;
- effective training;
- psychological support;
- achievement of personal goals.

Athletes with low self-confidence often fear making mistakes, avoid responsibility, and experience higher levels of stress during competitions.

Emotional stability. Volleyball competitions involve emotionally intense situations. Players may face disappointment after errors, pressure from spectators, and tension during decisive moments.

Emotionally stable athletes can control their reactions and remain focused on the game despite stressful circumstances.

Emotional stability is especially important for team leaders and setters, who are responsible for organizing tactical actions during matches.

Visualization Technique. Visualization is one of the most widely used psychological methods in sports psychology. Athletes mentally imagine successful performance situations before competitions.

Visualization helps volleyball players:

- improve confidence;
- reduce anxiety;
- strengthen concentration;
- mentally rehearse tactical actions.

For example, players may imagine successful serves, blocks, attacks, and defensive actions before entering the court.

Research conducted by foreign sports psychologists demonstrates that regular visualization exercises improve both psychological stability and technical performance.

Relaxation methods. Relaxation exercises are effective tools for reducing emotional tension before competitions.

The most common relaxation techniques include:

- breathing exercises;
- progressive muscle relaxation;
- meditation;
- calm music therapy.

These methods help athletes normalize heart rate, reduce muscle tension, and achieve emotional balance.

Self-regulation and positive self-talk. Positive self-talk is an important method for improving psychological readiness. Athletes use encouraging phrases to maintain confidence and emotional control.

Examples include:

- “I am ready for this match.”
- “I can perform successfully.”
- “I will stay focused.”

Self-regulation techniques help volleyball players control emotions and maintain concentration under stressful conditions.

Team psychological training. Volleyball is a team sport requiring strong communication and cooperation. Therefore, psychological preparation should also focus on developing team cohesion.

Team-building activities may include:

- group discussions;
- cooperative exercises;
- trust-building games;
- communication training.

A psychologically united team demonstrates greater tactical coordination and emotional resilience during competitions.

Coaches significantly influence athletes' psychological states before competitions. Effective coaches not only develop technical skills but also support athletes emotionally and mentally.

The coach's responsibilities include:

- maintaining positive team atmosphere;
- reducing athletes' anxiety;
- encouraging self-confidence;
- preventing emotional burnout;
- providing psychological support after failures.

Research shows that athletes who receive strong psychological support from coaches demonstrate higher levels of motivation and competitive success.

Research and Scientific Perspectives. Foreign sports psychology researchers such as Weinberg, Gould, and Hanin conducted extensive studies on athletes' psychological preparation. Their research indicates that psychological training significantly improves sports performance and stress management.

According to Weinberg and Gould, psychological skills training should become a regular part of sports preparation programs.

Uzbek researchers also emphasize the growing importance of sports psychology in modern volleyball training systems. Studies conducted in Uzbekistan reveal that psychological readiness contributes to improved emotional control and tactical efficiency among volleyball players.

Modern scientific research supports the integration of psychological training with physical and technical preparation.

Practical Recommendations. Based on theoretical and scientific analysis, the following recommendations may improve volleyball players' psychological preparation before competitions:

1. Include psychological training regularly in sports preparation programs.
2. Use visualization exercises before competitions.
3. Conduct relaxation sessions to reduce emotional tension.
4. Develop athletes' self-confidence through positive feedback.
5. Organize team-building activities to strengthen cooperation.
6. Provide psychological counseling for athletes experiencing high anxiety.
7. Teach athletes self-regulation and emotional control techniques.
8. Maintain positive communication between coaches and players.

Psychological preparation is one of the most important components of successful volleyball performance before competitions. Emotional stability, self-confidence, motivation, concentration, and stress resistance directly influence athletes' competitive effectiveness.

Modern volleyball requires comprehensive athlete preparation combining physical, technical, tactical, and psychological development. Scientific research confirms that psychological training methods such as visualization, relaxation, self-regulation, and team-building significantly improve competitive performance.

Therefore, coaches and sports specialists should pay greater attention to the psychological preparation of volleyball players in order to achieve high sports results and maintain athletes' emotional well-being.

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