

## OPERATIVE SYNTHESSES ON CHEERLEADING TRAINING

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**Abstract:** Cheerleading is a competitive and internationally popular sport, enjoying the prestige associated with various sports with tradition and even sports with Olympic status. These changes have emerged as a result of transforming from entertainment and leisure into a competitive activity that is no longer "just for girls."

The current evolution of this sport highlights the unprecedented development of the human body's ability to move, as well as the exceptional level of manifestation of different motor and psychic skills.

Cheerleading is based mostly on artistic gymnastics elements, but also on dance, aerobic and rhythmic gymnastics.

In this paper we propose to present a summary of the current knowledge about the innovation process in the field of sports training, applicable in cheerleading. It is based on the idea that only good sports training can support high performance and longevity in sport.

Thus, the development of motor skills is an integral part of the cheerleading training, and the general and specific physical training is indispensable for a perfect training of the cheerleaders.

Below is a synthesis of fundamental notions of cheerleading sport, which will help to understand the theoretical aspects of the training content that lead to a complex training.

**Keywords:** *Cheerleading, sport, training.*

### Introduction

Cheerleading has been a feature of sports events in the USA for many years now, and also recently in Europe. Its attractive, enthusiastic and spectacular presentations always make it a great experience for participants and spectators alike. For the choreography to be correct and for the girls' enthusiasm to really spill over to the crowd, systematic training, concentrated preparation, and competent guidance are necessary.

Cheerleading has become a increasingly significant sport over the past few years in Europe. Cheerleaders take part in more and more sports events, TV shows and other public appearances. There are even events that cannot be imagined without cheerleaders. At first sight, cheerleaders are good-looking young women waving pompoms around and moving to music, but when you look closer and really watch the performance, you soon realize that behind the spectacle there is a serious sport and a lot of hard work [4].

Cheerleading includes both the Cheerleading section (the acrobatic program) and the Cheer Dance section.

Cheer Dance incorporates stylized and adapted moves, bundle exchanges, teamwork and groups with a rich content of combined technical elements; incorporates specific and adapted movements from ballet and jazz; incorporating dance movements inspired by the hip-hop dance style, with emphasis on execution, style, creativity, body position and body control, rhythm, uniformity and musical interpretation.

Cheerleading is a competitive and popular sport. It requires a complex of skills and driving qualities that are needed in any other sport or even compare it to Olympic sports. Cheerleading also has risks, but it can also be seen as a leisure sport and a great way to stay fit.

In terms of performance sports, injuries are a threat, especially for the "flyer". Young cheerleaders who are thrown into the air are often exposed to extremely serious injuries occurring during the making of certain cheerleaders. But the picture is all in the cheerleading sport.

The supreme and performance dimensions of the cheerleaders are closely linked, both in reality and in the eyes of the athletes. Appearing before a crowd requires cheerleaders to be enthusiastic, energetic and fun. This is done not only by dances, tumbling or stunning construction and stunts, but also by the performance of the "winning attitude" in cheerleading. Cheerleaders with the right attitude are what they do to express their enthusiasm and "attract the crowd" [5] regardless of whether they are majorettes or sports cheerleaders. To meet these criteria, they must include the smile (exaggerated facial expressions) in a permanent movement, show jumps and acrobatic elements, choreographic movements as dynamic as possible and executed in perfect coordination with as many segments as possible of the body (arms, head, trunk, legs).

### Theoretical Background

Careful study reveals that cheerleading was already practiced in ancient Greece, where the crowds encouraged and supported their sporting

heroes in the Olympic Games with cheerleaders. Perhaps this motivated the athletes to achieve good results.

Women did not get involved until the 20th century, when the first megaphone was also used. It made it easier for the spectators to recognize and take up the battle cries. With the entry of women, the nature of cheerleading changed. Gymnastics, dance and even acrobatic elements were incorporated into the program, and cheerleading was introduced into high schools. In 1927, the first training book for cheerleaders was published under the title "Just Yell."

With reference to the current level of literature in Romania, we can only say that authors discuss briefly some aspects relating to the image of a cheerleader and do not provide support information to understand this branch of sport. It is imperative to bring contributions and clarifications to popularize this sport at the mass level and to create a tradition similar to that of artistic gymnastics, but also to provide reference material for those who are interested in this field.

#### **Argument of the paper**

As we all know, any performance in the sport is achieved through the help of several internal and external factors. Also, in cheerleading, performance is defined in terms of appearance: how should cheerleaders look to spectators and referees. The coexistence of contradictions between sport and performance, sport and aesthetics, competitiveness and supportiveness - capture both the relative quality of cheerleading teammates as a whole and their performance in a specific way.

This performance helps build and adopt a contemporary scenery for cheerleading. Indeed, the cheerleader holds a key place for show-and-entertainment-intensive production, but for clarification and permanent decision-making, first of all, it should be insisted that this competitive understanding be defined and organized in such a way as to be truly comparable to other sports.

There have also been many inappropriate comments that have been directed at protecting cheerleaders who, of course, were entirely out of the scope of the decision. Moreover, it seemed that the basic point where such a designation would require the nature of the activity to fundamentally change the adoption of the term "sport" as the primary purpose seems to be lacking.

Acrobatic cheerleaders also criticized the decision and seemed to interpret it as an obstacle to their sport. But this interpretation also proved to be

wrong. The final decision provided stronger incentives for cheerleader organizers to work diligently to organize, standardize, and increase competition opportunities for them. In fact, the response to the court's suggestion that NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) recognition would be very relevant to determine that this cheerleaders activity has a competitive structure similar to other sports. Two distinct organizations have announced initiatives to enjoy a competitive recognition for recognition as an emerging sport.

#### **Arguments to support the thesis**

In Romania, this sport is still at the beginning with traditional countries such as Western Europe or the United States. Those engaged in this mass activity want the cheerleaders no longer to be considered as animators, but to be recognized as sportsmen. Cheerleaders must be regarded as a sport in itself, which is also certified by the Romanian Majorettes Association (AMR), the European Majorettes Association (EMA) and the European Cheer Union (ECU) which, together with other international organizations in the field unite their efforts to promote, support and develop this sport.

The Romanian Majorettes Association is recognized by NBTA-Europe, the international federation, but it is far from other countries as a number of cheerleaders, being just beginning. There are very developed countries such as France, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, who have an international competition for over 30 years. Abroad, this sport is a true cult, and we can't compare it with them, but with time and with the help of as many studies in the field, we want to reach the same value level. Cheerleading is becoming more and more popular and earnestly respected worldwide with the support of several International Federations that invest in promotion. One of the most important is the United States All Star Federation founded in 2003, which established this sport.

The current evolution of this sport highlights the unprecedented development of the human body's ability to move, as well as the exceptional level of manifestation of different motor skills and psychic capacities. Following from the above, we want to emphasize the importance of the cheerleading sport branch and the fact that it relies heavily on components similar to those in artistic gymnastics and less on specific choreographies in dance.

Other components that contribute to achieving performance in both sports are training and coaching. They always make the difference in

rankings between gymnasts/cheerleaders who have similar qualities.

Training is one of the essential things that must be organized, on the basis of planning and according to the objectives proposed. Cheerleading training should also be carried out in appropriately equipped gym places (mattresses, sponges, carpets with a minimum thickness of 5 cm).

The coach provides them with information about the practiced branch, the technique of the content of the exercise, exploits the strengths and manages to bring as many sports as possible to the top of the rankings, has the patience and understanding of what the sports go through during the training and is a model for them.

- **Structure**

Cheerleading can be characterized as a dynamic, challenging sport that harmoniously combines elements borrowed from aerobic gymnastics with dance and specific compositional elements, with a rich arsenal of stunts and pyramids, whose difficulty and complexity are continually growth, which is why the physical development achieved in general by exercising sport activity and the development of psychomotor skills such as rhythm, team co-ordination and trust in oneself and in others. However, between cheerleading and gymnastics, there are many similarities based on the content of exercises that combine many acrobatic movements based on a series of motor skills such as strength, mobility, suppleness, balance, temporal orientation; but it also has many differences. If, in artistic gymnastics, force is used differently depending on the apparatus at which the gymnast evolves or to make with its own body bracing of acrobatic elements and jumps, in cheerleading, besides those acrobatic elements, the cheerleader must use its force to: raise, support, throw and catch another cheerleader. All these aspects must be made as technically as possible in order to avoid serious injuries. Studies have shown that in cheerleading, injuries are more and more serious than in artistic gymnastics. The effectiveness of execution in artistic disciplines, among which we can also consider cheerleading sport, is the result of harmony between dimensions: cognitive, affective, motor skills.

The formation of artistic skills is accomplished through a continuous process of dynamic transformation, positive movement of movement based on previous accumulations: physical, technical, artistic. The evolution of the structural difficulty of technical content in cheerleading demonstrates this.[6]

Artistic branches are the basis for cheerleading as sport and therefore contribute substantially to the genesis of specific motorsports. Through them, it is the acquisition of the structural and content elements of all the exercises: training, education, development "positions, movements of all body segments, universal mechanisms, basic applicative skills and utilities, which can further support motor and structural skills, capacities, general and specific. The impressive increase in sporting performance in cheerleading, as well as the very well-prepared cheerleaders, which aim not only at medals but also on qualifications in the finals, imperative is the continuous improvement, at the highest level, of the preparation of performance cheerleaders. In this sense, the practice and theory in cheerleading training determines a number of favorable priorities and factors of sports training, as follows:

- Physical training in Cheerleading
- Technical training in Cheerleading
- Artistic training in Cheerleading

- **Physical training in Cheerleading**

The specific exercises in cheerleading require an appropriate development of the muscular strength of the arms, abdomen, back and a very good explosive force, especially for bases cheerleaders. Also, flyers should have good mobility and a good fit of the spine, scapular-humeral joint, hip and ankle joint, to make as many difficulty stunts as possible.

The general and specific physical training is the basis for the formation of a knowledge system on the importance of psychomotor and coordinating skills in achieving cheerleading performances and the fact that their development and manifestation is supported by motivation and a volunteer effort. An appropriate speed, with a focus on reaction and execution speed, a specific strength appropriate to the complex effort determined by the requirements of the competition and, last but not least, good coordination and skill, are part of the sphere of motor skills and the determinant factor in physical training [7] .

The main goals of physical training in cheerleading are:

- 1) Forming and educating a fair, aesthetic gown by ensuring a harmonious development;
- 2) Ensuring an appropriate level of development and education of the driving qualities of cheerleading;
- 3) Increasing the body's effort to achieve or maintain the optimal form of competition;

4) Ensuring an optimal development ratio between all driving qualities, taking into account the dynamic changes caused by the growth process;

5) Educating the necessary psychic qualities and resistance to the stress caused by the effort in cheerleading.

Through the content of physical training, cheerleaders must develop their motor skills (speed, strength and detention, suppleness and coordination capabilities) and build their belief that the level of physical training makes efficiency, self-confidence and execution safe. Also in the affective field, the mobilization capacity needs to be developed to prepare even if it requires a great deal of effort.

The acquisition of the cheerleading exercises is spread over the training period required by the motor skills training process. In the workout, the effort should gradually increase by systematically repeating the exercises, their volume and intensity increasing with the functional possibilities of the body.

In addition to aspects of physical training in training, one must also take into account the adoption of a nourishing diet, optimal hydration and rest sufficient to keep the body in the best shape. Proper nutrition and proper fluid intake before any physical activity will improve body resistance.

#### • **Technical training in Cheerleading**

The technique is a system of motor structures, specific to a sporting branch with maximum efficiency, under the conditions defined by the developed competition regulation. Technical training includes all measures of a methodical, organizational nature established in the training process, in order to appropriately appropriate a technique specific to the sporting branch.

In gymnastics in general and in cheerleading in particular, the general foundations of movements include elements intertwined with skills that determine coordinating ability. Among the characteristics of the general bases of movements that are constituted in subordinated skills to the coordinating capacity, we emphasize: the precise direction, the amplitude of the movement that tends to the maximum and the degree of strain required for the correct execution of the stunt and pyramids.

By creating the general bases of cheerleading movements, from the very youngest age, conditions are created to develop coordination. V. Grigore [3] states that within the notion of coordination, both the dynamic coordination (body and its segments), the perceptive-motor

coordination (perception of space, rhythm, but also of its own movements), as well as static coordination (balancing).

The complexity of the technical structures in the cheerleading is given by the simultaneous participation of several people and segments in the making of a movement. This requires a very good coordination of the body segments of the entire group involved in the realization of the various stunt, pyramids and the ability to give the movements harmony and fluency.

The amount of coordination capacity depends on each cheerleaders ability to avoid or prevent accidents (unexpected situations), so common in cheerleading. In many cases, safety issues have been associated with coaches who do not have the expertise to teach according to the demands that today's cheerleaders require.

The level of coordination influences the learning process, mainly sensory-motor learning, being an important element in learning the driving skills of cheerleading (Stunt, Pyramid, Basket toss). The motor-learning capacity is the upper stage through which the movement finds its meaning, with the help of orientation and motor adaptability.

The determining factors of the coordination capabilities and the functions on which they are based are very important in the understanding of the mechanism of the motor complex.

The realization of the extremely complex technical elements and procedures from the technical content of the cheerleading sports branch involves the collaboration of several analyzers, namely: kinesthetic, vestibular, visual, auditory and tactile analyzers. It is known that all information systems carry out an elaborate activity, complementing each other and being in interdependence, under automated control conditions or on the contrary, conscious.

From a biomechanical point of view, all these elements and technical procedures require control of balance maintenance aimed at educating the ability to perform oscillations of the centre of gravity only in the sagittal plane (anterior-posterior oscillations) and horizontally (vertical oscillations).

All the elements and constructions that make up the cheerleaders' composition involve the presence of a static and dynamic balance in the execution of the technical elements and procedures.

For the technical preparation of the stunt it is considered:

- body technique specific to flyer cheerleaders;



- the safety and speed of climbing the flyer;
- variety and fairness of flyer positions in a stunt;
- the dynamics and explosive force of the bases in the lift;
- the way of descending from a stunt;
- sequences and different combinations of quests.

For the technical preparation of pyramids, it is considered:

- combinations of different elements, structures and constructions, transitions;
- the safety and speed of flyers in the pyramids;
- the number of people who are flyer and form a pyramid;
- the structure of a pyramid;
- correctness of the technique, aesthetic shape and visual impact on the overall image of a pyramid;
- difficulty;
- ascending or descending transitions to / from pyramids;
- duration;
- creativity.

For basket toss preparation, the following are considered:

- the way of execution of the technical elements;
- the height of the flyer;
- synchronization (where applicable) between flyers;
- degree of difficulty (given by the number of bases, flyers that are running);
- variety (many forms).

For the technical preparation of the tumbling it is envisaged:

- developing the kinesthetic sense, laterality, body image and image, general and segmental coordination;
- realization of a program for the acquisition and improvement of acrobatic elements;
- formation of group tumbling;
- the way of execution of the technical elements (includes artistic jumps if necessary);

Technical training must support the cheerleader and give her the conviction that:

- The acquisition of a very good technique is achieved through sustained practice,
- For the efficiency of executions in the presence of disturbing factors it is necessary to over-learn;

- The use of mental training is beneficial for increasing the efficiency of learning and improving the technique.

#### • Artistic training in Cheerleading

According to A. Dragnea [1] : "artistic preparation" means the totality of the choreographic, musical, stimulating creativity, the finality of which is reflected in the motor skills executed with a high degree of expressiveness able to convey a message to the spectators and the jury of referees".

It is noted the presence of two currents, not completely divergent, which reflects, on the one hand, the permanent artistic search and, on the other hand, the capitalization of the physical and technical performances. There must be a perfect correlation between the means of musical expressiveness and that resulting from the realization of the movements. Each phase of the movement that enters the technical composition of a quest, element or pyramid in the cheerleading, must follow a certain pace (execution speed), for the whole to be carried out with precision, safety and fairness, in accordance with the rigors imposed by technical.

Tempo is particularly important in learning the elements, the technical processes, in which it is necessary to change the frequency of movements without consuming unnecessary energy. The sense of rhythm and tempo is very demanded in all stages of learning the movements of cheerleading, especially in the stage of their consolidation.

The pace of the cheerleading motion is a "measurable feature by the ratio of the number of movements made over the time frame considered." [2]

Simultaneous and synchronous evolutions must reflect the specificity of the work in cheerleading and be the result of unity, even at the time of execution of constructions or acrobatic elements with high degrees of difficulty. Execution must show:

- the same technical perfection and coordination of movements;
- the same manifestation of speed or change of dynamism;
- perfect and identical coordination of all cheerleaders with musical accompaniment;
- the identical unification of expressiveness and style.

The harmony of the ensemble is better achieved if group members have the same physical proportions. In fact, all identical elements, made simultaneously, must be executed with the same:

- muscle intensity;

- speed;
- intensity of expressivity;
- kneeling and pyramid movement;
- flight height of the flyers during the flight phase.

The typical character of the cheerleading exercise is given by the participation of each cheerleader in the work of the group, in a homogeneous manner and in a spirit of collectivity. From this point of view, the composition should be designed so that the idea of collaboration, throughout the exercise, is obvious. The overall exercise, which in its composition does not sufficiently express this principle, loses its value.

Artistic preparation is just as important as physical or technical training. The beauty of the show is linked to it, and it implies:

- communicating with the public, transmitting the message, the feeling in dance, involve the spectators in the dance story;
- musical combinations and structures, in different templates, their identification;
- elements of artistic communication with those in the formation;
- observing rhythm and identifying it;

### Conclusions

Following the study of the specialized literature, I concluded that the notion of Cheerleading has evolved from that common element in the march of the military to a sport - a unique show, which has more and more practitioners.

If the cheerleaders were originally seen only in entertainment events, today there are large-scale national and international competitions such as European and World Championships.

Also, in this sport, the performance capacity is the result of the operational interaction of bio-psycho-educative systems, materialized in values

acknowledged and appreciated on the basis of criteria historically elaborated socially.

Exercises are choreographies ranging from one to three minutes combining spectacular elements of tumbling, jumping, stunts, pyramids, throws, but also a choreographic part of a maximum of 1 minute in which the acrobatic cheerleaders use their voice to involve spectators in the show and to support them during the exercise.

Cheerleading by diversifying technical content, by increasing the difficulty of stunt and pyramids by shaping a competitive system, offers a spectacle on the border between sport and art, always having an audience capable of appreciating the beauty and complexity of these sport.

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