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Theoretical Reflections on the Training of Offensive Tactics in Fencing Athletes

[Reflexiones teóricas de preparación táctica ofensiva del espadista]

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The training of offensive tactics in fencing athletes (13-15 years old) should focus on the development of capacities to study the opponents, anticipate surprise attacks, and create emerging tactical plans.

Aim: A theoretical assessment of considerations and definitions was performed to determine the offensive tactical training of 13-15-year-old fencers.

Methods: The scientific literature linked to specific professional competencies of the athlete's offensive tactical training was reviewed in English and Spanish (Google Scholar). The information was classified and arranged depending on the main topic.



Results: The evaluation of considerations and definitions of terms related to offensive tactics led to the design of a methodological matrix of dependent variable offensive tactical training, dimensions (perceptive and cognitive), indicators, sub-indicators, scales, and categories for evaluation.

Conclusion: The evaluation of considerations and definitions about this topic helped determine the dimensions to develop the operability of offensive tactical thinking, and enhance the preparedness of 13-15-year-old fencers.

Keywords: Offensive tactical thinking, offensive tactical training, fencers.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La preparación táctica ofensiva de los espadistas 13 - 15 años debe enfocarse a desarrollar la capacidad para analizar contrarios, anticipar ataques sorpresivos y crear planes tácticos emergentes. **Objetivo:** Se realizó una valoración teórica sobre consideraciones y definiciones para determinar la preparación táctica ofensiva de espadistas categoría 13-15 años.

Métodos: Se realizó una búsqueda acerca de la literatura científica publicada en español e inglés (Base de datos del Google Académico) relacionada con la preparación táctica ofensiva del deportista. Se inició la clasificación y organización según tema principal.

Resultados: El análisis de consideraciones y definiciones de términos relacionados con la táctica ofensiva facilitó elaborar la matriz metodológica de la variable dependiente preparación táctica ofensiva, las dimensiones (perceptivas y cognitivas), se establecieron indicadores, subindicadores, escalas y categorías para su evaluación.

Conclusión: El análisis de consideraciones y definiciones sobre el tema principal, facilitó la determinación de dimensiones para desarrollar la operatividad del pensamiento táctico ofensivo e incrementar la preparación de espadistas categoría 13-15 años.

Palabras clave: Pensamiento táctico ofensivo. Preparación táctica ofensiva. Espadistas.

SÍNTESIS



Introdução: A preparação tática ofensiva dos jogadores epee de 13 a 15 anos deve se concentrar no desenvolvimento da capacidade de analisar os adversários, antecipar ataques surpresa e criar planos táticos emergentes.

Objetivo: Uma avaliação teórica de considerações e definições foi realizada para determinar a preparação tática ofensiva dos esgrimistas de epée com 13-15 anos de idade.

Métodos: Foi realizada uma pesquisa na literatura científica publicada em espanhol e inglês (banco de dados do google acadêmico) relacionada com a preparação tática ofensiva do atleta. Foi iniciada a classificação e organização de acordo com o tema principal.

Resultado: A análise das considerações e definições dos termos relacionados às táticas ofensivas facilitou a elaboração da matriz metodológica da variável dependente preparação tática ofensiva, foram estabelecidas as dimensões (perceptiva e cognitiva), indicadores, subindicadores, escalas e categorias para sua avaliação.

Conclusão: A análise das considerações e definições sobre o tema principal, facilitou a determinação das dimensões para desenvolver a operacionalidade do pensamento tático ofensivo e aumentar a preparação dos esgrimistas de epee com 13-15 anos.

Palavras-chave: Pensamento tático ofensivo. Preparo tático ofensivo. Esgrimistas de epee.

INTRODUCTION

The training of offensive tactics of fencers should bring about proper responses to unpredictable actions in the matches. The theoretical reflections mainly address the contents of the methodological matrix and its dimensions (preceptive and cognitive), which were determined in this study for the particular case of fencer offensive tactical training, in the 13-15-year-old category in Cuba.

The research done in Cuba coincides with international studies, which reveal the need for pedagogical practice to improve tactical sports preparedness. Likewise, it emphasizes the poor methodological treatment used to favor offensive tactics. However,



attack teaching has not been comprehensive, since it requires systematic, assessing, customized, and progressive teaching-learning, where the priority lies on the level reached by the athletes.

In that sense, Fernández (2020) dedicated significant importance to emotional control to achieve focus, though he did not provide the tools to develop it as part of the offensive tactics training.

Unlike Hernández (2022), he claimed that athletes should foresee the opponent's movements and anticipate their tactics, just like they should adapt to the uncertainty of a match, though the way to train it is still unclear.

A similar report was made by Rodríguez (2022), who stressed the importance of understanding combat situations and finding several forms of responding. It requires perceptive processing, which permits figuring out the basics to offer a quick response.

Consequently, González (2022), recognized the existence of alternative studies to evaluate tactical development; however, they respond to a given context. This author suggests a guide for observational control of group offensive tactics in soccer, which fails to meet the research needs.

Hence, how to improve the fencers' offensive tactical training? The diagnosis showed theoretical shortcomings associated with offensive tactical thinking and the determination of structural and functional relationships in the operability of offensive tactical thinking to design tactical plans.

Empirical shortcomings were found in the guiding documents, which lacked information about the methodological and didactic requisites to confront the poor capacity of analyzing the opponents, anticipate surprising attacks, and design emerging tactical plans for the fencers in the study.

The documentary review confirmed the importance of dealing with the perceptive and cognitive aspects at these particular ages, due to their limited theoretical and practical knowledge of the offensive tactical training of fencers. Accordingly, this paper aimed to



develop the operability of offensive tactical thinking during the tactical training of fencers in the 13-15-year-old category, at the Pedro Miguel Díaz Coello Integrated Sports School (EIDE), in Holguin.

A diagnosis was performed to determine the state of the art of fencing training in the 13-15-year-old category. The analysis of the training plans, and the control of their implementation based on observation of training units for in-depth analysis of the completion of the set goals, helped determine the object of study of the tactical training of fencers.

Specialists from different provinces were surveyed. The new terms expected to be included in the methodology were presented and explained, including the theoretical rationale, which would permit organizing the instruments for training the offensive tactics to fencers. A total of 25 training sessions were observed, in addition to corroborating individual athletes' tactical behavior, based on the ideographic analysis.

DEVELOPMENT

The training of offensive tactics is a complex process due to the multiplicity of variables that intervene in the achievements or failures of athletes, which has been demonstrated through science. It comprises several disciplines thanks to the constant evolution of competing forms, and athlete adjustments.

Hence, Morales (2004); Tarrago (2016); Cordero (2019); Salazar (2022), highlighted the significance of offensive tactical training, as a critical element to succeed in sports.

Consequently, Díaz (2020), defined tactics as regulated rational behavior over the capacity of providing a motor response to the action of the opponents, and offensive, being a collective and individual action aimed to attack the opponent successfully.

Therefore, each athlete has an offensive tactical behavior according to their knowledge and experiences, so there is some correspondence with the definition assumed in this



study of offensive tactics of fencers, as an impetuous or level-headed stance toward the opponent in the form of attack during the combat.

Hence, the athlete's perception of the behavior of the opponent during combat is important to determine the type of attack and when to execute it effectively. Tishler (1984) stressed that any action loses efficacy if it can be foreseen accurately. However, the information about the forms used to activate such perception was lacking.

To Tejeda (2022), perception is the unity of sensations, described as the capacity (sensor-perceptive) that helps the athletes assess their actions from beginning to end, and to think before acting, thus creating a tactical plan.

Similarly, Pérez (2018); Rodríguez (2022); and Martín (2012) emphasize the importance of perception to determine distance, behaviors, or other perceptions. These authors focused on the demonstration of how stability affects attention focus, as determined by the direction of the psychological activity.

Contrary to Sánchez (2020), it assessed the characteristics of competitive activity in fencing, based on combat-related indicators, and Salazar (2022) explained the need of assuming the attack profiles in combats (13-15-year-old sable), with poor attention to fencers with little technical mastery.

Hence, the customization of training in fencing is essential. Ortiz (2019) designed methodological guidelines to tackle attacks during elite fencer combats.

The same occurred in the case of Jorge (2022), who developed a technical-tactical profile for modern pentathlon fencing, which favors the athletes' training.

In the training of offensive tactics, the cognitive side dealt with by Morales (2006) was seen as a way of developing skills that prepare the fencers to confront a more demanding and competent world of tactics. However, the methodology is the same for the three types of weapons.



As Rodríguez (2022) described, specific physical exercises provide training to young athletes, along with a greater learning capacity. Meanwhile, Borges (2022), did a study to develop cognition in the training stage, through attention focus in fencing. It differed from Blanco (2020), who set a strategy for tactical intervention that develops attention in fencing, with no reference to the behavior of coaches during such training, and the inclusion of perceptive and cognitive aspects.

Hernández (2012) conferred relevance to the customized lessons, as a method that favors the control and development of tactical preparedness, with a general reference to the tactical aspects presented in this paper. Meanwhile, Rodríguez (2018) said that correcting errors and reaching the highest possibilities during the performance of tactical actions is a way to strengthen the coach-athlete ties and enhance knowledge. He suggested a terminology that can stimulate greater efforts to get to the top of possibilities and error correction.

Rodríguez (2022) considered that if athletes know the techniques, the quality of their tactical resources can be improved. He claimed that anticipation and time of reaction are closely connected to decision-making, with a lower significance to perception.

Therefore, the importance of cognitive development of fencers during the learning sessions will be useful to face competitive situations. Accordingly, Driver (1986) said that while learning, a lot of active meanings are constructed actively.

Just like the understandable teaching model of Nino (2022) for significant learning through cognitive skills that help solve problems, improvements in offensive-tactical knowledge must enable the decision-making capacity in combat. Gualoto (2021) noted that within the Ecuadoran educational setting, high relevance was given to the theoretical knowledge about the training of offensive tactics.



In short, offensive tactical training oriented to the development of perception and cognition is necessary for 13-15-year-old fencers to teach them to think, analyze opponents, and design emerging tactical plans.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the theory led to a definition of the offensive tactics of fencers. The training of coaches and their experiences are critical to developing perceptive and cognitive aspects of 13-15-year-old fencers during the training of offensive tactics.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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The authors have taken part in the redaction of the manuscript and analysis of the documents.



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