

COMPARISON AND ASSESSMENT OF THE PARTICIPATION OF POLISH SWIMMERS AT THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES IN LONDON

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Annotation. *Purpose:* to assess and analyze the results of the Polish national team swimmers (Olympic and Paralympic) at the XIV Summer Games 2012 in London (UK). *Material:* Score Polish swimmers start in London was carried out on the basis of medals won, participation in the finals. London also comparing the results with respect to the personal life record. The studies used the method of improving the outcome of the relative percentages - RPG% (relative performance gain %). It is based on the equation of $RPG\% = \frac{\text{start time} - \text{end time}}{\text{start time}} \times 100$. Material was to analyze and develop the results obtained by the Polish swimmers at the XIV Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 in London. *Results:* the basic criterion for evaluating the training and participation of Polish swimmers at the games in London was the number of medals won. By this criterion, the Poles showed a rather weak result. Healthy athletes do not receive medals. Thus, they confirmed their poor showing four years ago. Athletes with disabilities unable to get on the podium three times. In relation to the previous games (they won 10 medals) the result was rather weak. *Conclusions:* in terms of participation in the Olympic finals and improve individual life records, the results were slightly better swimmers with disabilities.

Keywords: Olympic, Paralympic, games, London, swimming, disabled.

Introduction

Swimmers have been fighting for medals since Olympic Games 1896. Sportsmen-disabled have been taking part in Para-Olympics form 1st Para-Olympics 1960, in Rome. Distance of 100 meter was covered for less than 1 minute by swimmer Jhonny Weissmiller in 1922. Sportsman-disabled managed to reach such result nearly 60 years later and it was the reason of approach to sport as one of alternative form of rehabilitation of disabled. However, for recent 50 years primary rehabilitation character of swimming for disabled made way and basis of sports for them at the highest world level (James and Howe, 2005). It is necessary to say that not only sport result plays the most important role in swimming of disabled. Swimming improves their functional condition that is the most important aspect for prevention from progressing of dysfunction or for health improvement. Swimming of disabled shall be treated as a kind of physical functioning, which develops their skills in life independence and is an element of complex rehabilitation. It happens also that swimming becomes a kind of psychic and social rehabilitation, while appropriate sport result increases personal dignity (McCann, 1996; Kosmol et al., 2004).

To day nobody can doubt that sportsmen-disabled, who train several hours a day, do it only for own rehabilitation. Sport is becoming a profession for them. At present sportsmen-disabled fight not only with own limitations but with adversaries for results (Daly, Vanlandewijck, 1999). Sportsmen disabled train for victory, for records. It is a paradox but their fight and competitions will always make great impression, because their victory is victory over visible for other people limitations (Heazlewood, 2006; Kosmol и др, 2004).

Analysis of World Cup championship in Aindhoven in 2010 world Championship in Berlin in 2011 showed that level of swimming of sportsmen-disabled was progressing. That is why it will be more difficult to train comprehensive swimmer of world level. More and more swimmers-disabled start specializing in certain discipline; level of qualification of minimums grows; society starts to regard sports for disabled as sports for healthy people (Żurowska, Seidel, 2008; Żurowska, Seidel 2009).

At Olympic Games in London medals for swimming were won by United States. Polish swimmers did not win medals and were not classified. At Para-Olympic Games Poland had 3 medals and took 24th place, while main roles were played by China, Ukraine and Great Britain.

Purpose, tasks of the work, material and methods

The purpose of the research is to analyze and evaluate results of Polish combined Olympic and Para-Olympic teams at 14th summer Games, 2012, London.

Material and methods of the research.

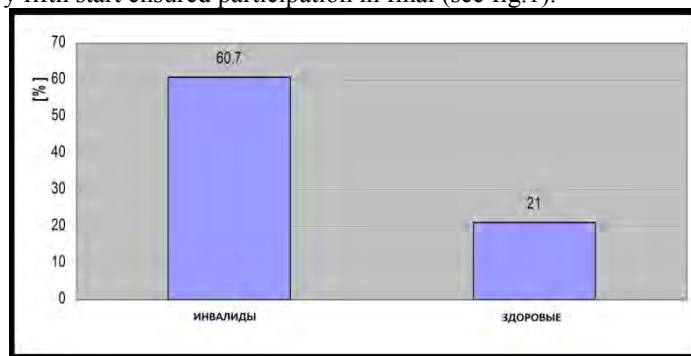
Evaluation of Poland swimmers starts at Games in London was carried out on the base of quantity of medals and by comparison of results, received in London in respect to personal life record. In our research we used method of relative percent improvement of result– RPG% (relative performance gain %), with the following equation in its basis $RPG\% = \frac{\text{initial time} - \text{final time}}{\text{initial time}} \times 100$. This methodic was developed and presented by Vladimit Issurin at seminar for coaches in Palma de Majorca in 2005 (Issurin, 2006). The material of our research was analysis and processing of results, received by Poland swimmers at Olympic and Para-Olympic Games 2012 in London.

Results of the research

Main criterion of evaluation of training and participation of Poland swimmers in Games in London was quantity of received medals. Unfortunately by this criterion, Polish swimmers showed weak result. Healthy sportsmen did not get any medals and thus, they proved their results, gained four years ago. Sportsmen-disabled managed to get on podium three times, however, in respect to previous Games, where they got 10 medals, result was weaker.

Participation in Olympic finals

Olympic Games always related to the most prestige sport measures in the world. At present time the fact of participation in Olympic final itself is considered to be prestige achievement among sportsmen (Pac-Pomarnacki, 2008; Karpiński et al., 2005). In London, among swimmers-disabled, in average nearly two from three starts ensured participation in final competition. It seems to be sufficient. But it is necessary to remember that for sportsmen-disabled it is easier to be classified in final that is a result of higher quantity of sport disciplines in swimming. Among healthy sportsmen, in average, every fifth start ensured participation in final (see fig.1).



Disabled Healthy

Fig.1. Percentage of disciplines, in which sportsmen-finalists participated in respect to all starts

Analysis of research's results

Evaluation of modern sport achievements is now rather difficult task. It is connected with growth of sport level in swimming of healthy and disabled sportsmen. This trend, which has been observing already for certain time, is still existing in modern competitions on swimming (Oprychał et al., 2005; Karpiński, Rejdych, 2007). It is proved also by results, achieved by swimmers in London. In most of disciplines winning of gold medals was possible only in case of best result in respect to personal life record. Similar trend was observed among sportsmen-disabled. Unfortunately healthy participants did not improved their best time from 19 individual starts; every competition was less successful than life record (see table 1).

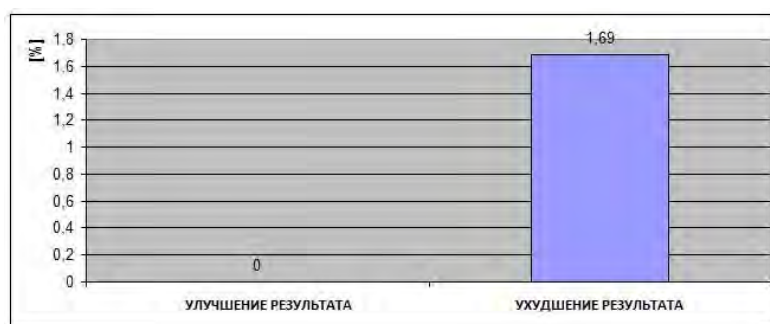
Table 1

Results of Polish swimmers at Olympic Games in London

	Name, surname/ style	Best personal result	Result in Games	Differential of result[s]	Place in Games	RPG [%]
1	Tchórz Alicja - 100 swimming on back	01:01.02	01:01.44	0.42	25	-0.69
2	Tchórz Alicja - 200 swimming on back	02:09.74	02:14.02	4.28	29	-3.3
3	Dowgiert Anna – 50 free style	00:25.23	00:25.59	0.36	30	-1.43
4	Szulich Dawid - 100 swimming on back	01:01.18	01:02.07	0.89	32	-1.45
5	Majchrzak Kacper - 50 free style	00:22.49	00:23.00	0.51	33	-2.27
6	Szczepaniak Karolina 400 complex swimming	04:45.13	04:52.50	7.37	31	-2.58
7	Wilk Katarzyna - 100 free style	00:54.95	00:56.13	1.18	27	-2.15
8	Czeriak Konrad - 100 butterfly	00:51.15	00:51.78	0.63	8	-1.23
9	Czeriak Konrad - 100 free style	00:48.22	00:48.44	0.22	9	-0.46
10	Cieślak Marcin - 200 complex swimming	01:59.77	02:00.45	0.68	19	-0.57
11	Cieślak Marcin - 200 b butterfly	01:56.13	01:57.07	0.94	19	-0.81

	Name, surname/ style	Best personal result	Result in Games	Differential of result[s]	Place in Games	RPG [%]
12	Tarczyński Marcin - 100 swimming on back	00:54.12	00:56.06	1.94	27	-3.58
13	Sawrymowicz Mateusz 400 free style	03:48.02	03:53.33	5.31	21	-2.33
14	Sawrymowicz Mateusz 1500 free style	14:45.94	14:54.32	8.38	7	-0.95
15	Jedrzejczak Otylia - 100 butterfly	00:57.84	00:59.31	1.47	25	-2.54
16	Jedrzejczak Otylia - 200 butterfly	02:05.61	02:09.33	3.72	16	-2.96
17	Korzeniowski Paweł - 200 butterfly	01:53.23	01:55.04	1.81	7	-1.6
18	Kawecki Radosław - 200 swimming on back	01:55.28	01:55.59	0.31	4	-0.27
19	Kuczko Sławomir - 200 swimming on back	02:11.51	02:12.51	1	21	-0.76
20	4x200 free style (women)		08:13.76			
21	4x100 complex swimming (men)					

Average worsening of results among healthy swimmers was at level 1.69% (See fig. 2). The least – in discipline 200 meters was received by R.K. – 0.27%, the biggest in 100 meters' swimming on back was received by M.T. – 3.58%.



Improvement of result worsening of result
Fig.2. Mean percent worsening of results, received by healthy sportsmen [%]

Sportsmen-disabled improved their life records 9 times from 28 starts (see table 2).

Table 2

Results of Polish swimmers at Para-Olympic Games in London

	Name, surname/ style	Best personal result	Result in Games	Differential of result[s]	Place in Games	RPG [%]
1	Mendak Joanna – 100 butterfly					
2	Mendak Joanna - 50 free style	00:28.34	00:28.38	0.04	5	-0.14
3	Mendak Joanna - 200 complex swimming	02:32.46	02:35.38	2.92	4	-1.92
4	Mendak Joanna - 100 free style	01:00.83	01:01.07	0.24	4	-0.39
5	Jabłońska Oliwia - 50 free style	00:30.90	00:30.58	-0.32	14	1.04
6	Jabłońska Oliwia - 100 free style	01:05.99	01:03.76	-2.23	8	3.38
7	Jabłońska Oliwia - 400 free style	04:48.45	04:41.65	-6.8	4	2.36

	Name, surname/ style	Best personal result	Result in Games	Differential of result[s]	Place in Games	RPG [%]
8	Jabłońska Oliwia - 100 butterfly	01:10.44	01:08.55	-1.89	2	2.68
9	Hamer Karolina - 50 breast stroke	01:02.26	01:05.62	3.36	8	-5.4
10	Woźniak Paulina - 100 breast stroke	01:23.23	01:22.45	-0.78	3	0.94
11	Woźniak Paulina - 200 complex swimming	02:39.60	02:44.17	4.57	8	-2.86
12	Woźniak Paulina - 100 butterfly	01:13.57	01:12.52	-1.05	6	1.43
13	Czech Jacek - 50 free style	01:06.01	01:06.41	0.4	4	-0.61
14	Czech Jacek - 100 free style	02:23.55	02:22.84	-0.71	4	0.49
15	Czech Jacek - 50 swimming on back	01:06.44	01:07.74	1.3	5	-1.96
16	Polkowski Grzegorz - 50 free style	00:26.98	00:28.18	1.2	11	-4.45
17	Polkowski Grzegorz - 100 free style	01:00.49	01:02.72	2.23	8	-3.69
18	Polkowski Grzegorz - 100 swimming on back	01:16.28	01:17.32	1.04	12	-1.36
19	Ryszka Marcin - 100 breast stroke	01:21.84	01:22.23	0.39	9	-0.48
20	Ryszka Marcin - 100 free style	01:04.60	01:06.59	1.99	14	-3.08
21	Ryszka Marcin - 400 free style	05:22.93	05:16.68	-6.25	10	1.94
22	Ryszka Marcin - 200 complex swimming	02:44.01	02:43.51	-0.5	10	0.32
23	Paterka Krzysztof - 100 breast stroke	01:12.13	01:14.76	2.63	5	-3.65
24	Pawlik Katarzyna - 50 free style	00:28.92	00:31.37	2.45	17	-8.47
25	Pawlik Katarzyna - 100 free style	01:01.59	01:07.14	5.55	12	-9.01
26	Pawlik Katarzyna - 400 free style	04:33.15	04:43.45	10.3	5	-3.77
27	Pawlik Katarzyna - 100 swimming on back	01:16.67	01:18.49	1.82	13	-2.37
28	Pawlik Katarzyna - 200 complex swimming	02:39.17	02:49.31	10.14	10	-6.37

It seems to be rather much – more than 32% of all starts (see fig.3).

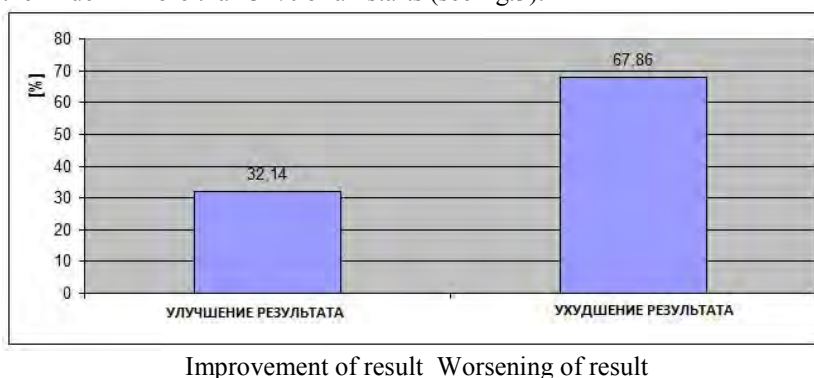


Fig.3. Percentage of disciplines, in which results of sportsmen-disabled were improved or worsened

Among disabled participants mean value of results' improvement was 1.62% - the best was demonstrated by sportswoman O.J. at distance 100 meters(butterfly style) – 3.39% and the worst – by M.R. at 200 meters (complex swimming) – 0.32%. Reducing of result was in average 3.34%. The biggest reduction was shown b K.P. at 100 meters' distance (free style) 9.01%, the least – by J.M. at 50 meters (free style) – 0.14% (see fig.4).

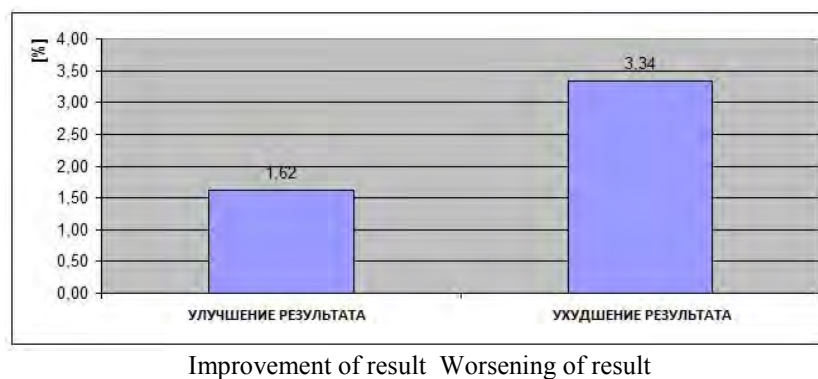


Fig.4. Mean percent value of improvement/worsening of results of sportsmen-disabled [%].

Discussion

Analyzing trainings and starts of Polish swimmers, healthy ones and disabled, at Games in London, we can make conclusion that for most of sportsmen participation in this kind of competitions is the most important start of 4 years period and, sometimes, of all their careers. Coaches made special plans of trainings for this event and then spent many hours for trainings. Competitions took several days, i.e. rather brief period in respect to time, spent for trainings. Beginning of starts requires maximal mobilization, concentration and the so-called splash of sport form (Costill et al., 1991). Unfortunately, both healthy and disabled swimmers failed. May be sportsmen and coaches could not reach the best form? Or it is only an excuse of participants, who trained too little or who had insufficient motivation? Or the problem is somewhere at deeper level?

In order to “hit home” with form the whole special group is working and just the members of this group is responsible in this case. Before competitions of Olympic level it is very important to plan properly training loads and testing starts. Modification of first and second stages shall be conducted so that sportsmen would have proper rest and would come to competitions in phase of super-compensation. For receiving of this effect it is necessary to correctly plan trainings, rest, biological recreation, diets and, the so called, coming out of trainings, i.e. gradual reducing of loads (Pelayo, 1995; Stewart and Hopkins, 2000).

In swimming of sportsmen-disabled leading places are taken by China, Ukraine and Great Britain; among healthy sportsmen the most advanced are USA, China, France.

Recent time all these combined teams has made great step ahead in results (Martin, 2000), while Polish team froze up at its level. Polish disabled swimmers won only 3 medals. Even more there were results of healthy sportsmen. In spite of the fact that one of the biggest teams in history – 17 members - went to London, it did not win medals. It participated in four finals and did not beat any records of Poland and did not reach any life record. Such destructive combination of team staff and absence of results happened for the first in history. Even four years before London Games situation was not so bad: in spite of the fact that then Polish swimmers were classified in three finals, their cut then records of Poland and their life records. These are undoubted facts pointing at level of swimmers’ fitness to the most important competitions of 4 years period.

Before Games in London healthy sportsmen seemed to be in better situation than 4 years ago. Rather strong were members of team, who had not participated in Games yet. Silver prize winner of World cup Konrad Cherniak, gold prize winner of European cup Radoslav Kaventskiy are the sportsmen, who surely hoped for better results. They seemed to do all the best to achieve as good results as possible at the Games. Sportsmen-disabled were in similar situation. Two years earlier Polish swimmers won 11 medals at World cup and three years earlier – in Berlin- 14 medals of European cup. Combined team included world champions Katzhina Pavlik, Ioanna Mandliak. It is an undoubted fact of potentials of Polish combined swimmers’ team. So, where are the reasons of so grave defeat?

As far as healthy sportsmen concern reasons of failures, first of all, seem to be bad luck and the so-called “discordance with form”. Also we consider prohibition of “speed” suits in favor of textile ones (since beginning of 2010). However in London sportsmen from other countries improved world records and life records. Konrad Cherniak improved two individual life records of Poland at World cup in Shanghai, i.e. in suit of textile. May be the reason is that in Poland there are no conditions for trainings at the highest level. Though recent time Polish swimmers go abroad – for example Konrad Cherniak to Spain or Marcin Tsesliak to Florida in group of coach Greg Troy or Mateush Savrymovuch from group of David Salo – to California. In London such “emigrants”, however, demonstrated the same form as other sportsmen. That is why it would be incorrect to say about conditions of trainings. For example Konrad Chetniak competed in 2011, in Shanghai with Michael Felps and at World Championship, in Istanbul, in 2012 Radoslav Kaventskiy defeated Rayan Lohty. So where to find the reasons of failures? May be our coaches are not as fantastic as we thought? In Poland we have little sport circles in higher educational establishments, though in the world just universities create sportsmen. Missy Franklin, triple champion in London was 16 years old, Chamions Ruth Maylutit and Kath Lidetskiy were 15 years old each of them. Among sportsmen there were 20 years old boys, such as Chad le Claud from SAR. Two years ago Marcin Tseslak competed with him at Youth Games in Singapore. A year ago le Claud

was did not come in final at 100 meter distance (butterfly style); he was the fifth at distance of 200 meters. But in London he won silver and gold medals in these disciplines.

In their turn, sportsmen-disabled 9 times improved their life record from 28 starts. It seems to be sufficient, because it is 30% from all starts. Unfortunately it permitted to won only 3 medals: gold, silver and bronze. Such reduction – 70% (from 10 in Beijing to 3 in London) can not be excused by financial or organizational problems at first stage of training. One of reasons is surely system of trainings of the best sportsmen, who train, first of all, in clubs, which are restricted in training time because of bad financial situation. It is undoubtedly too insufficient to fight for medals at championship. That is why we think financing shall be oriented, in the first turn, on clubs and then on central training. At last it should be noted that the most remarkable results in starts were achieved by Kataznina Pavlik, swimmer-disabled, current world champion in free style at 400 meters, class S10, who in no discipline reached her best life records. Among healthy women-swimmers she swam relay race 4 x 200 meters by free style worse than at Championship in Poland several months earlier.

Conclusions:

1. Basing on quantity of received gold medals participation of healthy sportsmen and disabled swimmers in Games in London should be evaluated negatively.
2. From the point of view of participation in Olympic finals as well as improving of individual life records results of disabled sportsmen were better.

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