

IMPROVING THE PRE-COMPETITION TRAINING SYSTEM FOR 15–16-YEAR-OLD ADOLESCENT FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Abstract: This article outlines the specific features of organizing the pre-competition training phase for 15–16-year-old adolescent football players, optimizing physical and tactical loads, and utilizing an individualized approach methodology. During the course of the study, a set of training exercises aimed at improving the functional capabilities, specialized endurance levels, and psychophysiological states of adolescents was developed and tested in practice. The results indicate that the proposed mesocycle model significantly increases the effectiveness of the players' technical and tactical actions. Furthermore, the study analyzes the role of intercultural competence and individual character traits within the educational-training process.

Keywords: adolescent football players, pre-competition training, mesocycle, physical training, tactical formation.

Introduction

Achieving high results in modern football depends heavily on how correctly the training system is established during the youth reserve development phase, particularly during the adolescent period of 15–16 years of age. This age period is characterized by rapid organizational growth, the formation of functional systems, and psychological restructuring processes. Organizing pre-competition training on a scientifically grounded basis at this exact stage serves as the foundation for the athlete's future professional career.

The main goal of the pre-competition phase is to unify the physical, technical, and tactical capabilities achieved during the general training period into a cohesive system and to bring the team directly to the start of official matches in peak sports form. Frequently, the incorrect distribution of load volume and intensity by coaches triggers overtraining states within the adolescent organism. This not only negatively impacts competition results but can also harm the health of young athletes.

Nowadays, integrating not just pure sports methodology but also general pedagogical and humanitarian approaches into sports training is one of the most urgent issues. The formation of individualist concepts within sports teams, alongside maintaining a balance between collective and personal interests, holds significant importance. Especially for young athletes participating in international competitions, developing intercultural competence and communication skills across different age groups ensures psychological stability both inside and outside the game.

At the same time, improving the foreign language teaching system when preparing

sports and pedagogy specialists within the modern higher education system expands the opportunities for field personnel to master international experiences. The efficiency of regional sports and tourism infrastructure is also directly connected to creating quality conditions for the pre-competition training of young athletes. A comprehensive study of these issues serves to elevate the training of adolescent football players to a qualitatively new level.

The purpose of the study is to develop an effective pedagogical-methodical model for optimizing the pre-competition training process of 15–16-year-old adolescent football players and to substantiate its practical significance.

Methods

The research work was organized on the basis of the Faculty of Physical Culture at Oriental University and involved 15–16-year-old football players from a specialized children and youth sports school. A total of 30 young football players participated in the experiment. They were divided into two equal groups: the control group (15 players) and the experimental group (15 players). The football players in the control group trained under a traditional program. For the experimental group, a pre-competition mesocycle plan developed by us, based on load differentiation and an individualized approach, was implemented.

The following methods were utilized during the research:

1. Pedagogical observation and chronometry – used to determine the density and intensity of exercises during training sessions.
2. Pedagogical testing – conducted to evaluate the specialized physical and technical preparation of the football players through the following tests: 30-meter sprint (speed), 5x30-meter shuttle run (speed endurance), long-distance kick, and passing for accuracy over a long distance from a running start.
3. Pulsometry – heart rate (HR) was continuously monitored to evaluate the impact of the load on the functional state of the football players.
4. Mathematical-statistical methods – Student's t-test was used to determine the statistical significance of the obtained results.

The experimental program for pre-competition training encompassed a 4-week mesocycle:

- Week 1: General volume, physical recovery, and tactical foundation-building phase (HR 140–160 beats/min).
- Week 2: Specialized speed and endurance loads week, featuring exercises under game-model conditions (HR 160–180 beats/min).
- Week 3: Tactical formation and model games week (working on hidden tactical schemes and set-piece situations).
- Week 4: Tapering week reducing load volume while maintaining intensity to achieve a supercompensation effect (maintaining muscle tone).

In organizing the training process, we relied on the methodical principles of modern sports pedagogy as well as multidisciplinary approaches. In taking the individual characteristics of young athletes into account, the psychological crises and motivational

factors of the adolescent period were thoroughly considered.

Results

At the conclusion of the four-week experiment, significant differences were identified between the performance indicators of the experimental and control groups. The growth rate was particularly high in the experimental group regarding specialized endurance and speed indicators.

The table below presents the main test results recorded before and after the experiment.

Dynamics of changes in physical and technical indicators of football players during the experiment:

Indicators and Tests	Groups	Before Experiment	After Experiment	Growth Rate (%)	Statistical Significance (p)
30 m sprint (sec)	Control	4.45	4.41	0.9	$p > 0.05$
30 m sprint (sec)	Experimental	4.48	4.28	4.5	$p < 0.05$
5x30 m speed endurance (sec)	Control	24.8	24.4	1.6	$p > 0.05$
5x30 m speed endurance (sec)	Experimental	25.1	23.5	6.4	$p < 0.01$
Long-distance kick (m)	Control	42.3	43.1	1.8	$p > 0.05$
Long-distance kick (m)	Experimental	41.8	46.5	11.2	$p < 0.01$
Passing accuracy to a target (out of 10)	Control	5.2	5.8	11.5	$p > 0.05$

Passing accuracy to a target (out of 10)	Experimental	5.1	7.9	54.9	$p < 0.01$
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As can be seen from the table data, the 30-meter sprint speed in the experimental group improved from an average of 4.48 seconds down to 4.28 seconds ($p < 0.05$). No significant shift was observed in the control group. The largest difference was recorded in the 5x30-meter shuttle run test: the growth in the experimental group reached 6.4 percent, with the total time shortening to 23.5 seconds. This is a direct benefit of the specialized interval training sessions provided during the pre-competition period.

The indicator for passing accuracy to a target rose from 5.1 to 7.9 in the experimental group (a 54.9 percent increase). This result proves that the system of model exercises aimed at shaping the skill of executing technical actions under conditions of fatigue during the pre-competition phase was correctly selected.

Discussion

The obtained results clearly confirm that the organisms of 15–16-year-old football players adapt quickly to highly intense yet correctly planned workloads. Progressively reducing the overall volume of workloads while increasing the intensity is a golden rule of pre-competition training at this age. Otherwise, high-volume training sessions right before games tend to slow down the movement speed of football players.

The model games week applied in our research helped adolescents overcome mental stress. The intensification of personal identity and individualism during the adolescent period can create certain difficulties in team sports. A coach must recognize the individual characteristics of each adolescent and guide them toward the collective goals of the team. In this process, utilizing methods of communication and intercultural solidarity among adolescents strengthens the positive climate within the team.

From a pedagogical perspective, a modern coach is required to be a specialist possessing deep pedagogical and psychological knowledge, rather than someone who merely hands out physical exercises. Improving the training system for physical education and sports personnel in higher education institutions and integrating international experiences is the primary factor in solving this problem. Furthermore, by correctly establishing sports management and tourism at the regional level, it is possible to ensure high-quality competition environments for young football players.

Our experimental program not only boosted functional indicators but also shaped the tactical thinking capacities of adolescents. The football players acquired fast decision-making skills during games, which enables them to successfully overcome stressful situations that arise in match conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The pre-competition training process of 15–16-year-old adolescent football players

cannot be limited solely to traditional physical exercises. It must incorporate a system of targeted, volume-reduced, and intensity-increased specialized microcycles.

2. The developed 4-week mesocycle model allowed for a 6.4 percent increase in the specialized endurance indicators of the experimental group, and elevated their target passing accuracy level by 54.9 percent.

3. Taking an individual approach when working with young athletes, accounting for adolescent psychology within the team, and correctly shaping intercultural communication relationships are critical pedagogical factors that guarantee the effectiveness of pre-competition training.

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