

Axiological, ethical and utilitarian benefits of UNIFIGHT

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Abstract

Background & Study Aim:

The aim of this article are benefits of a new discipline of combat sport referred to as UNIFIGHT (universal fight). The basis for the analysis is the evaluation of UNIFIGHT in comparison with holistic view of defence education, goals and conditions of optimal training process recommended by modern theory of sport.

UNIFIGHT is a combat sport that is useful for development of both human moral stance and optimal psycho-physical fitness i.e. expected defensive dispositions and abilities to overcome numerous difficult situations. The further merits of UNIFIGHT include respect for Olympic axiology and the rules of fair play; several formulas of sport rivalry which may be trained by people practicing other combat sports and martial arts including children and adolescents; exceptionally interesting event; complete, consistently and progressively developed training model, which allows for correct planning and controlling of a training process.

Key words: combat sports · defensive dispositions · defence education · fair play · martial arts

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INTRODUCTION

UNIFIGHT from synthetic perspective

The aim of this article are benefits of a new discipline of combat sport referred to as UNIFIGHT (universal fight). The premise for a goal formulated in such a way are long-term studies and research as well as the experience of both authors resulting from practising combat sports and martial arts – including UNIFIGHT – in various roles: as a competitor, coach, referee and sport activist.

UNIFIGHT (universal fight) has emerged as a result of contemporary research aiming at integration of combat sports with other disciplines in order

to develop effective system of complementary preparation of a person to counteract aggressive subjects in the social environment [1-3]. It has become a part of modern concepts of developing defensive dispositions of a human [4-6].

UNIFIGHT is a universal and currently the most comprehensive combat sport, which is rapidly developing in numerous countries. The International Federation Amateur «UNIFIGHT» (IFAU, French abbreviation: FIAU) founded in 2000 in Paris comprises already 32 countries from various continents. The Federation has held the World Championships every year (since 2000) and less regularly Europe

FIAU – Federation Internationale Amateur de «UNIFIGHT» (English: International Federation Amateur «UNIFIGHT»)

Defence education – no definition of this term is universally used; however, among basic criteria of defence education, R.M. Kalina lists the need of parallel development of ethics and human fitness. Taking into account the age criterion he mentions two types of defence preparation: elementary defence preparation (possible and justified to be practised with children aged 6-12 years as well as with the adults); universal defence preparation (possible to perform by women and men from the age of 12 until the old age). While considering defensive functions of a person in the society Kalina mentions intentional defence preparation (e.g. military, police or antiterrorist training) [4, p. 45-48].

Defensive dispositions – are a compilation of human characteristics and properties of biological and personal nature to determine (with a certain level of probability) readiness and capacity to counteract different forms of offensive behaviours of other people, especially the violence and/or aggression from their part. The following are the most essential defensive dispositions: self-defence instinct, inner development, moral strength, readiness to kill the assailant as well as a readiness to become a fatal victim in a defensive struggle [4, p. 29]

championships and international women's and men's cup. The World Championship held in 2009 in Prague, Czech Republic was attended by competitors from 40 countries. Since 2008 FIAU has annually conducted nationwide and international competitions among children 10-11 and 12-13 years old (light-unifight); since 2010 also in Poland [7]. Current information about the development of UNIFIGHT is available on the website of FIAU (www.unifight.ru), whose president is Sergey Novikov, PhD, an Olympic judo champion.

Sporting competition in UNIFIGHT consists of:

- completing a special obstacle strip that includes shooting a pneumatic gun or paint ball gun and throwing at the target (adults with a sporting knife, children with a tennis ball);
- hand-to-hand combat in the ring, which may be performed in several versions:
- in light formula only takedowns and throws are permitted [8],
- in semi-light formula throwing techniques, joint locks and strangling techniques are permitted [8],
- in classic formula the combat is taking place in special gloves and protective helmets; apart from throws, takedowns, joint locks and strangling techniques, blows with arm and leg are permitted but only in vertical position [9].
- Children aged 10-11 years are not allowed to use blows.

There is also winter type of UNIFIGHT (Winter Universal Fight), which is planned to be presented during the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014. The obstacle course is replaced with competition in a skiing race (at a distance of 2 x 200 metres) combined with shooting at the target whereas the ring fight is replaced by a combat on the snow limited to throws and takedowns [10].

UNIFIGHT was developed in Russia as a synthesis of various combat sports and martial arts (judo, wrestling, sambo, boxing, karate, etc.) as well as experience gained on military training grounds. The goal of UNIFIGHT creators was to develop universal, the most suitable for uniformed services combat sport, which can be practiced safely enough and in accordance with the Olympic sport ethics and aspirations [11]. The basis of the idea to create this formula of sporting combat was the belief that the officers involved in the fight with the criminals have to approach them overcoming various obstacles and then

incapacitate them fighting on limited space (which is imitated by the ring in sporting combat) [3, 11]. The creators of UNIFIGHT have also taken in the account the necessity of developing shooting skills in conditions of physical fatigue, emotional stress and lack of time. Thus, they have created a combat sport, which is a very spectacular, medially attractive and requires comprehensive preparation.

Holistic criteria of analysis and evaluation of UNIFIGHT adopted in the article

Rational, theoretically and socially justified analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of various combat sports and martial arts required humanistic and holistic approach taking into account both biological and psychological needs of a person as well as contemporary criteria of his physical, moral, psychological and social education [6, 12]. Humanistic perspective does not allow to accept the training limited to teaching only utilitarian skills in hand-to-hand combat. Such skills may be used as measures of aggression (criminal) and during legitimate self-defence acts. Therefore, apart from developing physical fitness and skills also axiological and ethical competences of students' personality should be developed in the socially desired, educational and integral sports training model [6, 12]. Underdevelopment of these competences and lack of integral education leads to escalation of violence and numerous other negative phenomena verging on the social pathology [6, 12], which may be generally described as deviations that dehumanize sport.

These deviations are often provoked and reinforced by mass media, which provide spectators with entertainment full of aggression, violence and bloody fight scenes. In this context intrinsic values of sport, the need to promote the rules of fair play in sport and life are easily forgettable. Therefore, the authors of the declaration entitled Sport and Fair Play in the 21st Century, published by the International Committee for Fair Play in December, 2007 in the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris, remind us that sport must be a carrier of positive values [13, p. 11-13]. Rivalry cannot lead to brutality or threaten the lives of sportsmen. "Health – that of others, of team-mates and one's own, above all must be fully preserved" [13, p. 12]. The authors of the declaration act against all kinds of brutal, aggressive behaviours in sport as well as against doping and aggressive commercialization of sport. They state that those phenomena "contradict traditional norms and pedagogical model of sport" [13, p. 11]. They also emphasize

that fair play is not limited to the normal behaviour of sportsmen but applies to all other people connected with sport: teachers, sport activists, parents, physicians, supporters, sponsors and media representative.

The position of the International Committee for Fair Play defending educational values of sport closely resembles the views of Japanese authors of the extensive article on sport and budo martial arts entitled *Budo: The Martial Ways of Japan* [14]. They critically assess the development of sport and martial arts being limited to teaching movement techniques and sport rivalry. They defend the values and standards of teaching established by Prof. Jigoro Kano – the creator of judo. Kano has created judo as complete, modern and comprehensive system of physical, moral and defence education, which was implemented in schools by the Japanese authorities [15, 16].

These ideas can be summarized by saying that apart from physical fitness and health protection, socially desired practise of sport must ensure development of axiological and moral competence. The mission of sport and physical education involves development of peace culture based on the respect for life, dialogue, solidarity and tolerance as well as trying to eliminate war, violence and discrimination [17].

The analysis of views presented by modern sport theoreticians leads to conclusion that from social and holistic point of view sports training should fulfil several basic criteria:

- it should be directed towards strengthening the organism and educating for health;
- it should ensure students the development of comprehensive physical fitness;
- it should develop the personality of trainees in order to prepare them for autonomous, creative social life;
- it should prepare for optimal acting in difficult situations;
- it should be a planned, gradual process based on the knowledge about trained people and regularities of human development and adaptation processes to various forms of physical fitness [6, 12, 18].

We have applied these listed criteria to comprehensive analysis and evaluation of UNIFIGHT from two perspectives i.e. binding rules of sport rivalry in this discipline as well as proposed training system of the competitors.

Advantages of UNIFIGHT

Sport rivalry in the ethics of fair play

The rules of UNIFIGHT competitions are developed so that special attention is paid to protection of health and dignity of the participants. They define the safety requirements concerning rivalry conditions, characteristics of sport facilities and equipment as well as prohibit actions directly threatening life or health of the participants [8-10]. In classic formula where blows with arms and legs are allowed, UNIFIGHT competitors fight in protective helmet and shields to the legs as well as appropriate gloves. They must obey chivalrous rules prohibiting to hit lying competitor (what is allowed e.g. in MMA or during steel cage match). The competitors are allowed to deliver a blow to the strictly defined locations on the opponent's body, who must be in vertical position. The combat takes place on elastic ground, in the ring or on the appropriate mat in special soft shoes. Authorized referees, who stop the fight in case of health threatening situations, are responsible for the safety of the competitors.

All variants of rivalry in UNIFIGHT described at the beginning of the article begin with overcoming the obstacle strip. This requires comprehensive physical fitness and promotes health protection because not fit enough (time limit) and injured people are not allowed to participate in the subsequent stage of rivalry. Injuries to the shoulder joint prevents the competitor from e.g. crossing the hang-climbing horizontal ladder and moreover a person with this injury would not be able to participate in hand-to-hand combat (which may deepen the injury).

Several forms (variants) of sport rivalry

As it has been already mentioned, the creators of UNIFIGHT have developed four variants of rivalry (light, semi-light, classic UNIFIGHT and Winter Universal Fight). This should be seen as an important advantage of this combat sport. Coaches and competitors may choose variant of sport combat relevant for their age, level of technical preparation, experience and psychological determinants. This allows for safe participation of children in the competition and gradual development of hand-to-hand combat skills – from mild combat techniques involving takedowns and throws to harsh as hands and legs blows. Such situation is also useful from psychological point of view. Increasing starting demands and the need for gaining new skills protect against psychical weariness caused by no changeability of training and lack of perspectives for further development. As indicated by the results of the scientific research learning new types

of movements and forms of rivalry is an essential factor in the constant development of coordination skills of a sportsman [19].

Extremely interesting sports event

From the first seconds all variants of sport competitions in UNIFIGHT are especially interesting, unique event. They create impressions and emotion characteristic both for athletic sprints and combat sports. At the beginning the competitors wearing blue and red strips participate in spectacular rivalry on the identical obstacle strips lasting usually ca. 30–60 seconds (depending on the weight category, age, skills and characteristics of the obstacle strip). The participants breach a labyrinth, wall, horizontal ladder, balance beam, tunnel and a 6-metre-height net, shoot and throw a sporting knife at the target (children throw a tennis ball). It resembles the obstacle race. However, it is not about one type of movement, but about comprehensive physical fitness combined with the ability to act fast and precisely during intense effort and rivalry. Such fitness is typical for the best commandos and members of elite intervention units [20]. Regulation one-minute break after the first participant reaching the ring is established for wearing the pads, but it does not lower the prestige of the event. Second participant is still running through the obstacle strip, where he could lose first point or drop out of further rivalry (if will be running at the time 50% longer than the winner run). Afterwards, the spectator observes the combat in the ring creating the same emotions as in other combat sports. However, UNIFIGHT is more interesting – both in terms of educational values and diversity as well as dynamics and aesthetic qualities of the fight. There are no intervals of time dragging on to several minutes – as e.g. in MMA or during steel cage fight – when the competitors are almost motionless or try to stroke lying opponent in the head or torso. The UNIFIGHT competitor may move from various, dynamic actions in vertical posture to fight in horizontal posture, but this can last no more than 5 seconds. If no competitor is able to perform joint locks or choking, a referee stops the combat and competitors restart it in vertical position. After finishing the obstacle strip the participants usually fight 2 rounds each lasting for 2 minutes, if they are not able to finish the fight in an allowed manner. All this provides great variety and attractiveness of the sport event. Only those competitors may win who are very fit, have comprehensive technical preparation and fully control their actions.

As a sport spectacle UNIFIGHT may not completely satisfy the fans of combats in the style on the Roman

gladiators. There is no bloody, brutal scenes which provided crowds in ancient Rome with entertainment. The regulations of UNIFIGHT prohibit deviations, that dehumanize sport, and therefore this attractive and exciting sports event proceeds with full respect of ethics rules and the Olympic sport aesthetics.

Comprehensive preparation for self-defence

UNIFIGHT is a combination of combat sport and martial arts. All combat sports and martial arts develop specific capabilities and allow for gaining skills that may be used during self-defence acts [21]. The scope of techniques taught is, however, more or less limited, specific to each discipline but in case of some combat sports (e.g. boxing, fencing) provides preparation for self-defence only in fragmentary scope. The combat may occur in various conditions, situation, distances and postures. It may involve relatively gentle or extremely harsh measures, or even the use of objects in defence against an armed assailant [5, 6, 21].

Self-defence skills of outstanding masters of budo resulted from long-term practise of several various systems of hand-to-hand combat [22]. The above-mentioned observations are required for the evaluation of merits and limitations of various combat sports in complete preparation of a person for self-defence. The preparation may be limited neither by practice of wrestling sport nor sport involving only blows [6]. In this context the advantages of UNIFIGHT become transparent because it enables the most comprehensive preparation for defence against direct or indirect, aggressive actions even of an armed person. Sports combat in this discipline comprises much further scope of motor activities than in other combat sports. Training and rivalry on the obstacle strip comprehensively develop motor and coordination abilities, shooting and throwing at the target skills, whereas hand-to-hand combat training and rivalry on the ring (where it is allowed to use strokes with arms and legs, throws, joints locks and choking in a limited space) develop wide range of skills and abilities needed for defence against direct physical attack. The combination of rivalry on the obstacle strip – where a participant additionally has to shoot and throw at the target – with the rivalry on the ring poses greater demands on the competitors in terms of psycho-motor preparation, stress control and moves the combat closer to real conditions of hand-to-hand combat [4–6].

We, therefore, conclude that systematic training of UNIFIGHT may currently provide the most complete, psycho-motor preparation for widely

understood self-defence. Such preparation involves also the readiness to kill particularly dangerous aggressor [4]. The law permits killing the aggressor while repelling direct, unlawful attack on any welfare protected by the law. It, however, requires that during the self-defence act one has to take into consideration the sake of life and health of the assailant as well as not endanger them beyond the measures of the rights of self-defence [12]. This supports the conclusion that in socially desired, optimal model of teaching self-defence we must take into account the criteria of law and ethics. This has been recommended by the creators of Oriental sports and budo martial arts. Positive social model of teaching self-defence combat is referred to as fair self-defence [6, 12].

Complete model training system

The majority of contemporary gladiator combats promoted by the media are the negation of the ideals of combat sports and martial arts [23] and do not have systemically developed models of training consistent with complex criteria of human education and contemporary knowledge. The educationalists limit themselves to teach specified repertoire of combat techniques and some forms of physical preparation. They usually do not see the need to conduct training on the scientific basis and in accordance with modern theory of sport [24]. This leads to depleted, fragmentary methods and measures of training practise deformed in terms of strategic goals. It is reduced to the dimension of physical fitness and a search for physical advantage in a given formula of hand-to-hand combat. Lack of systemic approach and training based on the scientific grounds results in negative consequences regarding planning, control and methodology of training. This phenomenon has been observed for many years by one of the authors in Mexico and in Poland during professional career in sports clubs and universities. Direct observations of classes conducted by the coaches of various sports and martial arts have revealed the shortcomings in measures, methods and forms of training [25]. Being thesis supervisor of students, who trained various combat sports, has given the opportunity to note lack of relevant methods to control training effects. When students chose a subject concerning general or special physical fitness of people training their discipline, it was revealed that they have never been tested and they could not indicate tests used in their disciplines. Therefore, they willingly accepted the proposal to use UNIFIGHT tests.

UNIFIGHT, in a sense of proposed training system, has no less advantages than as a sport rivalry

formula. This is evidenced by textbooks on teaching programmes of UNIFIGHT published in Russian in 2006 and 2012 [26, 27].

In the light of scientific knowledge, sport training should comprise a set of tasks, which performance enables good health, education, the harmonious development of the physical, technical and tactical skills and a high level of special physical preparation [28]. Competent educationalists should plan gradual development of a sportsman and five types of his preparation i.e. physical, technical, tactical, mental and theoretical. All those types must be monitored and periodically evaluated [18, 29]. The knowledge on trained people, complex monitoring and evaluation of their preparation are essential part of proper training process which must be adopted to the age and individual capabilities [6, 18, 28, 29].

The analysis of the content of UNIFIGHT training programme demonstrates that this proposal is complete, systemic and developed on the basis of scientific knowledge on sports training. The programme fulfils complex requirement of modern sport theory regarding rational training. Its authors propose progressive, integral model of training comprising all required types of sportsman preparation and sets of measures and training methods developed in detail for each age categories. The handbooks consist of several parts: general characteristics of systemic preparation of sportsmen, organizational and methodological recommendations, prescriptive part and extensive methodological art [26, 27]. To sum up the authors propose the following strategy and stages of training during 10-15 years:

The stage of sports and health training (no specialisation, the goal is to develop health and adopt an organism to physical effort);

The stage of basic preparation (the continuation of health training, development of comprehensive physical fitness, teaching the basics of a technique, sufficient preparation to implement requirements established for age groups in terms of general and special preparation);

Training and educational stage

- Substage of the basics of specialization (1-2 years of study)
- Substage of deepened sports specialization (3-4 years of study)
- The stage of sports improvement
- The stage of a sports championship.

The above proposal of UNIFIGHT training stages is completely justified, consistent with the progressive model of sportsman development recommended by the modern theory of sport. The authors of UNIFIGHT training programme in a praiseworthy way suggest that the long-term training process should begin from the stage which aims at development of health and general physical fitness.

CONCLUSIONS

UNIFIGHT is a combat sport fully useful in development of both human moral stance and optimal

psycho-physical fitness i.e. their expected defensive dispositions and abilities to overcome numerous difficult situations.

The further merits of UNIFIGHT include respect for Olympic axiology and the rules of fair play; several formulas of sport rivalry which may be trained by people practicing other combat sports and martial arts including children and adolescents; exceptionally interesting event; complete, consistently and progressively developed training model, which allows for correct planning and controlling of a training process.

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